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LILITH

SUMMER 1991 VOL. 16, NO. 3

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by Maria Stieglitz

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LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam: *"After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her 'Lilith.' Lilith said: 'We are equal because we both come from the earth.'"* (From *The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b*)

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There's a young woman I routinely encounter in the subway station. She sits on the grimy floor and in a cheerful voice asks, "Can you spare ten cents?" I give her all the change I have, about a dollar, feeling generous and then feeling like a creep and a hypocrite because I feel generous for giving so little. Then our ritual exchange takes place. "Thanks so much. Have a good evening, darlin'. Have a safe trip home." *She*'s wishing *me* safe passage. I could cry.

How can we do it, moving out from our own pain and from the intermittent perception of the pain of the others who lurk at the periphery of our vision? Several of the women who come to you in this issue of LILITH have, in their own ways, begun the task of *tikkun olam*—making the world better: physically, spiritually, politically.

For them there's no resignation, no quiet (or even noisy) acceptance of the status quo. Instead, their optimism carries them them into tasks they wouldn't necessarily have envisioned themselves taking on at the beginning of their repair work.

These women look around and find lives their own can touch. They are not muttering "What can I do?" nor analyzing their own moves (as I find myself often doing with the woman in the subway). They are simply going ahead and doing what looks like it needs to be done, mending fences or mending verses or mending lives. Marcia Falk makes the *Song of Songs* sing for us in English, perhaps for the first time. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz sees new ways to support Jewish women in therapy. The women who formed Jewish women's credit unions three generations ago simply refused to accept economic helplessness or dependency as women's lot.

These women demonstrate a radical and urgent optimism. Trusting themselves, strong and centered, they have the confidence to build from nothing, or to reshape what has been, in ways that can carry the rest of us along too.

A different kind of altruism is expressed by those foundations and individuals whose financial contributions make LILITH possible. You know that the cost of your subscription does not begin to cover the costs of producing the magazine. To keep LILITH affordable, we turn to those who can make tax-deductible contributions to the magazine's work. Often the support comes from you, our readers, in the form of personal checks. This season our special thanks (and yours, too) go not only to those generous people listed below, but also to: the **Nathan Cummings Foundation** for support of women's spiritual renewal, the **Gimprich Foundation**, the **Hunt Alternatives Fund** and the **Koret Foundation** for our explorations of women's grassroots initiatives for social change; the **Lucius N. Littauer Foundation** for support of literature, especially in translation; the **Paul Rapoport Foundation** for AIDS coverage; the **Anne and Harry Reicher Foundation** for health issues; the **Silverweed Foundation** for reporting on intergroup dialogue; and **The Lilly Endowment** for an exciting new project on Jewish women and philanthropy. Watch upcoming issues of LILITH for features and news stories on all these topics.

If you have ideas about other foundations, large or small, with interests in areas consonant with ours, please let us know, so that we can try to secure the funding LILITH so urgently needs. Because many of our individual donors are feeling their own giving crimped by the economy, we need to find additional support. Please do *your* part in repairing the world by making your own tax-deductible contribution to LILITH Publications, Inc. and by telling us about other funding sources.

Susan Weidman Schneider

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LETTERS

I.B. SINGER'S SISTER

I.B.'s "Yentl," I think, was a *use* of his sister Esther, not a tribute. The tribute would have come–but it never came!–in life, not art.

If only Esther ["Esther Singer Kreitman: The Trammeled Talent of Isaac Bashevis Singer's Neglected Sister," Spring 1991] had lived to this day; and if only Isaac Bashevis Singer were acute enough currently to assimilate the significance of the [current interest in her writing.]

Congratulations on a stupendous idea brilliantly executed.

Cynthia Ozick
New Rochelle, NY

BLACK WOMEN & JEWISH WOMEN

LILITH's article on Black-Jewish dialogue was outstanding. ["From Our Heads And Our Hearts: Connecting With Black Women," Winter 1991] For the past four years I have been engaged in interracial work in St. Louis, a highly polarized community. I have been struggling with many of the same ideas and concepts Letty Cottin Pogrebin addressed. How can we even begin a dialogue without respect, integrity or mutuality? Most importantly before we begin, we must each confront our own intolerance.

I recently heard a Hasidic tale about the *rebbe* who says to his student, "How can you say you love me if you do not know what brings me pain?" Dialogue, to be effective, should first teach us what causes others' pain.

Lynn Lyss
St. Louis, MO

As a participant in a failed Black-Jewish dialogue, I was most interested in Letty Cottin Pogrebin's article. The experience was so painful that even those of us who remained friends have not been able to discuss the reasons for its failure. Unfortunately, honesty about each group's needs is not easy to communicate without a high level of trust among the participants.

Natalie Pelavin
Flint, Michigan

Letty Cottin Pogrebin's article is moving and nearly identical to my own experience.

We need to coalesce around common issues, not just to become a major force in "repairing the world," but because the friendships to be made are beyond value.

Ilene Olansky
Studio City, CA

12-STEP RECOVERY PROGRAMS

Feminism never kept me sober. Sobriety, however, has enriched my feminism.

Gail Unterberger's revision of 12-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous ["12 New Steps for Women in Recovery," Spring 1991] portrays a stereotypical Jewish woman who perhaps drank a little too much sherry. Most of the Jewish women alcoholics I know (myself included) were not nearly so genteel as all that. We have been needle junkies, prostitutes, thieves, con artists, winos and other less pretty pictures. To assume a community of sisters is rather middle class and out of reach for Jewish women who have no homes or food.

Name and address withheld

I am the program coordinator of an outreach program for addicted Jews in 12-step recovery fellowships. About half my clients are women. Most have a feminist perspective and lead lives that reflect it. After many battles were won they were still left with a big problem: addiction.

Does admitting that one is powerless over an addiction (step #1) reinforce sexist stereotypes? Is this step easier for female addicts to take than their male counterparts? Does "turning over" anger and praying for serenity limit *appropriate* political activity? I am a feminist. Yet all things considered, I see the 12-step program bringing far more good than harm.

Claire Silver
San Francisco, CA

As someone whose life was saved 33 years ago by a 12-Step program, I was deeply troubled by Gail Unterberg's reworking of the steps. With the help of the women in my program I struggled with the steps, and moved from despair into recovery, yet I worry about turning to community, as Unterberger suggests, instead of to God or higher Power, because of the very nature of an ongoing community. Most of the women's communities to which I have belonged have eventually been subject to conflicts that repeat the abusive behaviors we have come together to heal. There is real risk to women in recovery when this happens. There is a profound sense of loss and betrayal. When our strength is internal and spiritual we can participate in these communities to benefit from their strength, nurturance and creativity, without danger.

Marcia Cohn Spiegel
Los Angeles, CA

UNDERSTANDING JEWISH WOMEN

Enclosed is my check, given in memory of my father, David Friedman. I would like to make this an annual gift on his yahrzeit.

My father spent a great part of his life trying to understand Jewish women–his mother, his wife, his daughter, his daughter-in-law and his grandaughters. Had he had access to LILITH he certainly would have had a greater likelihood of success,

Liz Freedman
New York , NY

YOUR PROCHOICE VOICE

What can non-profit women's groups do to protect legal abortion? ["1990: The Jewish Stake in Abortion Rights," Fall 1989].

Politicians respond to constituents; all politics is local, as they rightly say. Work for prochoice political candidates. Politicians need money, so raise funds for the candidates–or withhold them. Vote the issue. One can't but notice the miraculous political conversions reported daily in the media as prochoice is perceived as a winning idea. Invite speakers. A group won't lose its tax status for what a speaker says at a dinner.

Polly Rothstein
Westchester Coalition
for Legal Abortion
White Plains, N.Y.

Pulitzer Panel Cites Forward

NEW YORK — The editor of the Forward, Seth Lipsky, emerged as one of three finalists for this year's Pulitzer Prize in distinguished editorial writing.

The chairman of the Forward, Harold Ostroff, who submitted Mr. Lipsky's work for consideration for the Pulitzer, said he was "immensely proud that the Forward had achieved such recognition during its first year of publication in English." It is, he said, "further indication of our conviction that a Jewish newspaper that confronts the issues honestly and without pulling punches will earn a place on the national scene."

Six editorials, written by Mr. Lipsky during 1990, were submitted for the prize. "Beyond Jackson Vanik" argued that some day the world would wake up to a "sickening fact" — that for years policy toward Soviet Jewry has worked to make the Soviet Union *Judenrein*; the editorial declared that the Forward was waiting for the politician who would stand up and demand to know why the Soviet Jews should have to go anywhere.

"After Ellis Island" declared the Forward's sympathies for open immigration into America, citing not only free-market arguments but also a celebrated plea made in the 1920s by the Socialist congressman from the Lower East Side, Meyer London.

The submissions also included the most talked about Forward editorials of 1990: "Declare the War," in which the Forward became on August 10 the first newspaper in the country to call unambiguously on President Bush to go to the Hill for a war declaration against Iraq; "Iraq and Vietnam," which warned Democrats against inviting Mr. Bush to the Hill only to block his military option in the Gulf; and "Baghdad and Munich," which warned that Mr. Bush in offering to send Secretary of State Baker to Baghdad was perilously close to committing the kind of blunder that Prime Minister Chamberlain made in his September 1938 meeting with Hitler.

The latter editorial cited the celebrated editorial published in the Forward on October 1, 1938, warning of the tragedy that was to follow from Munich. "Mr. Lipsky has said that the Forward editorial of October 1, 1938, was a source of enormous pride," Mr. Ostroff wrote to the Pulitzer Board. Mr. Ostroff said he hoped "that an editor from yet a next generation after will someday go to a library to see what the Forward wrote as America was challenged in 1990."

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SURVIVING IN SONOMA

There are "before" and "after" photographs here that few people in the world have seen.

One pair shows a huge Cambodian family in Pnomh Penh seated proudly for a portrait, and then its sole survivor of the Pol Pot regime a few years later.

Another set juxtaposes four Jews in Germany before they were deported to concentration camps with a photo of three of them in 1990, their faces heavy with the past.

A third documents a Japanese-American couple, being married in a Buddhist temple in California decades ago, then silver-haired and loving, despite the fact that during World War II they were forced into a U.S. internment camp.

All these pictures are part of the Sonoma County Survivors Project, a photography and oral history exhibition on display at the Sonoma County Museum in Santa Rosa, California this spring. The brainchild of photographer Phyllis Rosenfield and writer Lisa Slater, the project features approximately 60 photographs, and text in which the survivors tell their stories.

By bringing together three disparate groups of people–Eastern European Jews, Japanese-Americans and Cambodians–each of whom has suffered unique persecution, the Survivors Project is testimony to the fact that oppression is possible under any government, in any time and place. Through Rosenfield's black-and-white portraits–and the families' old photographs that she has restored–each atrocity has a face.

Rosenfield and Slater began the Survivors Project five years ago, when the State of California began a new school curriculum on genocide and human rights. Initially, the team planned to photograph and interview only Holocaust survivors, but expanded their project when it was noted that the local population included many Cambodians and Japanese-Americans.

Lisa Slater explains: "We had one group who was oppressed here a while ago, one who was oppressed far away a while ago, and one now whose oppression is still going on."

Yet the exhibition also communicates hope. Survivors are shown grocery shopping, playing with their grandchildren, cooking dinner–looking like anyone else in America. They are living their lives, speaking in voices that at one time were silenced, cultivating their private gardens. Genocide, racism and cruelty may exist everywhere, but, as documented by the Sonoma County Survivors Project, so does the will to survive.

—Susan Jane Gilman

[*For information call Lisa Slater (707) 578-4374.*]

BLACK WOMEN AND JEWISH WOMEN

News about two projects bringing together women of different ethnic, racial and religious groups.

1. The Black-Jewish Women's Coalition of Indianapolis has just published a bibliography of fiction and non-fiction suggested by its members–fifty Black and fifty Jewish women–of books they would like to share with one another. The selections, including *Marjorie Morningstar* and *Sula*, are annotated "B" or "J," depending on the source of the recommendation. The pamphlet should be useful as a handout for joint programs for committee groups and also, for example, for Black and Jewish sororities looking for joint projects. Which leads us to:

2. For several years women affiliated with the Hillel House at Queens College of the City University of New York have visited a shelter for homeless women in their borough. Because there are Black as well as Jewish women served by the shelter, this year the students, recognizing an opportunity for creating an alliance with Black women on campus, worked on the project with a Black women's group, as part of the Queens College Black/Jewish People-to-People project. They made and served lunch and presented an afternoon program of entertainment to shelter residents.

HELPING FEMINISM FLOURISH IN ISRAEL

Even though Virginia Snitow is largely responsible for enabling the women's rights movement in Israel to come to life, she will swear she is not an activist. Snitow willl admit something other woman often deny. "I *am* a feminist."

A New Yorker and a mother of two grown children, she is an elegant maverick, an 80-year-old dynamo whose grace is rivaled only by conviction. She has taught English in Harlem high schools, been National President of the American Jewish Congress' Women's Division, has written articles for *The New Republic*, founded a film company and earned a place in *Who's Who in American Politics*. She has spent the past thirteen years as chair of US/Israel Women to Women, an organization she founded in 1978 to promote equal rights in the Holy Land.

"A group of Israeli women came to me in the mid-1970's and told me things I'd never known: that there were 100,000 battered women in Israel; that they couldn't get a divorce without their husbands' consent; that an abortion law women had fought to change had been taken away as soon as the Likud party came to power."

Snitow was also shocked by reports that a shelter for abused women in Herzliya was being forced to close for lack of funds. She called together a group of resourceful, committed women who pooled together their finances and saved the shelter. US/Israel Women-to-Women was born.

Over the past 13 years, Women-to-Women has been instrumental in an array of campaigns and projects, including winning rights for Israeli women's sports groups, implementing reforms in the army, and subsidizing women's studies programs. "We give money to organizations that move women's consciousness, status, equality and economic conditions forward," Snitow says. "We help Israeli women help themselves."

A luncheon in May in Manhattan celebrated Snitow's 80th birthday and her retirement as chair of Women-to-Women. History professor Jewel Bellush will succeed her.

—Susan Jane Gilman

When War Threatens Israel

THE JERUSALEM POST
INTERNATIONAL EDITION

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Eight terrorists slain near borders

Belgium releases terrorist in swap for four hostages

Day of reckoning

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ARE YOU A THERAPIST WITH A JEWISH CLIENT? READ ON...

by Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

What is a your task–as a therapist–when a Jewish woman becomes your client? Very often therapists assume that Jewish identity is unimportant to their clients. But that assumption may be wrong.

The woman you know as a radical lesbian carpenter may have spent hours of her childhood in Hebrew school. Ask her about her Jewish identity. What did those hours mean to her? And don't assume that you know what a given Jewish ritual means to a client. Ask. A friend of mine once told her therapist that she didn't want to schedule an appointment for Yom Kippur. "What, do you need to pray or something?" cracked the therapist, evoking in my friend feelings of exposure, shame and alienation. That therapist could have asked a *real* question: "What does Yom Kippur mean to you?" Your first task as a therapist is not to assume you understand. Assume you need to listen and learn:

Children and Family. The decision to have or not have children and the meaning of family have particular weight in the Jewish community, as in other minority communities, especially those subjected to genocide. The people's survival has depended on the strong family, and on the woman's reproductive performance. To take a simple example, the therapist who sees in a Jewish woman's anguish about whether or not to have a child only a classic feminist dilemma may miss a dynamic of which even the client herself may be unaware.

Money. To many non-Jews, Jews *are* money. A friend tells me that whenever she mentions money in therapy sessions she feels intense anxiety, lest her therapist click into anti-Semitic stereotypes. Jews' relationship to money is further complicated by the dramatic class shifts many of us have experienced in our own or in our parents' lifetimes.

Alienation. The non-Jewish or assimilated Jewish therapist needs to consider that the woman who looks to her like a "normal white woman" has experienced in her own life or through her parents' experience serious alienation and even danger from being Jewish; thus the question of Jewish paranoia asserts itself. Many of us were taught that the world is dangerous because the world *is* dangerous. A therapist who treats this fear as pathology seriously misses the point. A friend whose father survived the Holocaust tells of her reluctance to mention Hitler to her therapist; her fear is that her deepest loyalty and rage, her commitment to Jewish survival and memory will be defined as pathology, therapized away.

"The Real Jew." Any minority culture which has encountered the force of American assimilation has lost much of itself. Some Jews have lost more than others, and often we feel ashamed of this loss. Many of us have only one Jewish parent, or received no religious education, or have a partner who is not Jewish. From a relatively homogeneous culture not so many generations back we have developed a tremendous range of experience and relationships to Jewishness, but without a corresponding sense that this range is valid, acceptable. Jews tend to feel judged by other Jews as not Jewish

(Continued on page 29)

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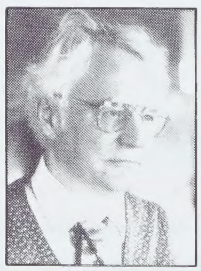

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Your people, My people

Finding acceptance and fulfillment as a Jew by choice

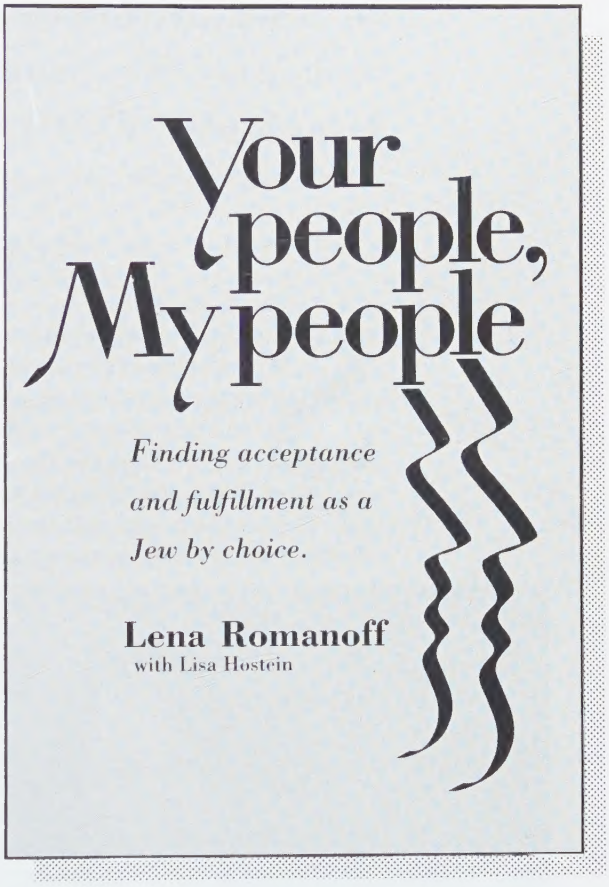
by Lena Romanoff

Today, there are more converts to Judaism than ever before, but neither the process nor the converts themselves are well understood.

From her personal experiences as a Jew by choice and as a counselor to thousands of converts all over the U.S., Lena Romanoff has developed a comprehensive approach to the multifaceted challenges posed by this growing phenomenon.

Both practical and anecdotal, *Your People, My People* provides insight into the choices and potential difficulties surrounding the conversion process itself, the options available, and the challenges to families, rabbis, and the Jewish community as a whole.

For the convert and potential convert, the book offers essential information, from descriptions of the various branches of Judaism to suggestions on what it takes to actually "feel" Jewish. From her interviews with converts, their families and friends, Romanoff illustrates the tremendous impact the conversion decision can have on the lives of those who choose Judaism as well as on the lives of those around them.



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LENA ROMANOFF is director of the Jewish Converts Network, 1112 Hagys Ford Rd., Narberth, PA 19072. She organizes conferences on conversion, intermarriage, and interdating, lectures widely on these topics, and provides private counseling for conversionary and interfaith couples and their parents.

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Five Women Who Shake the World

by Maria Stieglitz

The women you'll meet on the following pages have taken roads less travelled by; they've followed their instincts along paths that lead to real social change. They have three things in common: they've each sacrificed power, status and money to do what they believe in; they are sure of their choices; they bring others to their causes.

Rescuing AIDS Babies

Stefanie Held, 44, founded and is the former executive director of a Dallas home for children with AIDS and children whose parents have AIDS. Bryan's House is the only facility in the United States that provides total care (day-care, respite and residential) for infected AIDS children. It also supports the children's families with food, clothing and social service referrals.

Since its inception in 1988, Bryan's House (named after a baby who died of AIDS) has served 130 children. For the first six months of its operation, Held's own retiree parents served as live-in houseparents, while Held continued her work purchasing and renovating the facility and raising the nearly two million dollars that the project required.

Doug Handel

"Getting Bryan's House off the ground took three years of solo, 100% total involvement," says Held. "It dominated every minute of every day. Liza Stern, one of the rabbis at our Temple, was a crucial support to me. When I thought I was nuts, she was always there, telling me I could do it."

Held, who describes herself as "five-foot-one, full of chutzpah and very social" is confident and exuberant. With no college degree, Held says, "I never let the lack of credentials stand in my way. If there's a need, I try to zoom in and fill it."

Between 20 and 25 children come to Bryan's House daily for respite and daycare, and several children live at the home. Owned and managed by a not-for-profit organization that Held founded, the House has a $350,000 annual budget and supports an executive director, an administrative staff of six, and eleven childcare workers in a facility open around the clock.

"Fewer and fewer children are getting AIDS from blood transfusions," explains Held. "AIDS is now a family disease." Families without private health insurance can become devastated financially, and Bryan's House "commits to getting these families to the point where they're able to function again."

Bryan's House is only the most recent of Held's social service projects. Several years ago, when she thought the rabbis in her 8,000-member synagogue, Temple Emanu-El, needed help serving hospital patients, Held trained 100 volunteers to visit patients three times weekly. Next, she developed a bereavement program, which provided families in mourning with meals, transportation and childcare. Finally, Held founded Hineini ["I'm Here"], a 24-hour hotline for anyone needing help of any kind.

After she had completed a six-month chaplaincy program at a Dallas hospital, Emanu-El offered Held a paying job as director of pastoral services, and her AIDS work evolved from there.

"An interfaith support group for women with AIDS started at Emanu-El. There were two women with AIDS in the group (one was the late Bryan's mother), four children (two with AIDS), the group leader and me. I was just there because I was interested in learning about the disease. But I started to feel how shunned and isolated these AIDS victims were."

Held began helping one of the women care for her children, eventually bringing the kids into her house and synagogue office because "the mother had no other options. One day the woman said to me, 'It's not dying that's really getting to me, it's who will take care of my children?' I said to her, 'I *promise* you your kids will be taken care of.' Soon more kids came along, and I realized I had to do more than take care of them myself."

Held started asking everyone for money, writing grant proposals and accompanying her husband, an attorney, on business trips just so she could investigate whether AIDS services for women and children existed in other cities.

At home Held's husband Maurice helped write grant proposals while Kim and Josh, the Helds' children (now 23 and 19), put in countless hours babysitting for the AIDS children who moved in with them.

"Before Bryan's House we were just an ordinary family," says Held. "Now my children recognize the value of reaching out and helping. Not just feeling bad—but actually *doing* something that will make a difference."

Growing up in a Reform Jewish family in Brookline, Massachusetts, Held says her childhood revolved around the Jewish community center. After marriage, she and Maurice moved, with two small children, to Dallas.

New to Texas and still in her twenties, Held became seriously ill. "My lungs just stopped working and I was hospitalized for over a year," she explains. "After that I spent another year housebound on portable oxygen tanks and intravenous tubes. We had very little support because we didn't know anybody yet in Dallas. During those years I thought, 'This is the rest of my life'." Slowly, Held's good health returned. "I gained a lot of empathy through those scary years," she reflects.

Held realizes that creating Bryan's House has given her new clout and authority. "I can walk into most institutions in Dallas now and be recognized and listened to." Currently, Held is working with Annette Strauss, Dallas' Jewish mayor, on developing a drug rehabilitation program for teenagers. And on the back burner is a plan to strengthen an adults-with-AIDS housing program.

Ironically, says Held, "Though I started out motivated by my love of children, in working so hard to create Bryan's House I had very little time to spend with the kids."

"What I liked best was not getting the building built or seeing two million dollars come in. It was," she sums up,"teaching a six year old with AIDS to walk, rolling out the play dough, giving lots of hugs."

"AIDS is now a family disease"

Ministering to the Old

Six years ago, Rabbi Dayle Friedman, then 28 years old and fresh out of both social work school and seminary, became the first rabbi at the Philadelphia Geriatric Center, a congregation of 1,100 residents, mostly women, almost all over the age of 80.

"Is this something you've actually *chosen* to do?," new acquaintances routinely ask, presuming, as Friedman says, that "poor me—I must have gotten stuck with this job."

But, says Friedman, "I'm passionate about my work. There's something remarkable about the power of Judaism to transform the lives of

old people. And my congregants here are precious resources, alive with near-lost melodies, recipes, the real *bubbeh meisehs.* One resident, from a small village in Russia, tells me stories about her mother the *firzogerin* [a female prayer-leader for a synagogue's women's section who prays as a surrogate for illiterate women]. And just yesterday a man told me that every year on the seventh day of Passover, when we read the Torah account of the Jews' crossing the Red Sea, his Chassidic grandfather in Poland would go with his friends to a special room where they would tip over a full barrel of borscht—which is red, of course, as in 'Red' Sea—and they would sing and dance in the borscht until one in the morning. Tell me," she says triumphantly. "Where else in the world are you going to be exposed to this great stuff?"

"Some people want to die."

Friedman never has to cajole her congregants into participation. "Even if ritual observance has not been part of their lives for 60 years," she says, "it once was. They have a reservoir of experience on which to draw. They are no strangers to deriving pleasure and value from Jewish life."

She gives the example of Yetta [not her real name], an Alzheimer's sufferer. "You place yetta in a Shabbos service and all of a sudden this woman who seems so completely disconnected from everything around her is now utterly present, and she knows it's Shabbos and she's touched. The place that is still whole in her is touched."

But how does a rabbi implement religious services for a population that includes the ill, frail and not fully ambulatory? On Fridays, a volunteer carries a "Shabbos basket" (full of wine, challah rolls and electric candles) to people who are bedbound. Student rabbis hold afternoon services on five different floors. At suppertime, when Friedman chants blessings in the main dining room, her singing is piped through the public address system. Friedman has had pews removed from the sanctuary to provide wheelchair space, and she has helped design large-print, lightweight (for arthritis sufferers) prayerbooks with transliterated Hebrew. ("Many of these women, because they are women, were never taught to read Hebrew," explains Friedman.)

She also does a lot of what she calls "guerrilla counselling. I make hospital and dining room rounds—it looks like I'm simply shmoozing. But I really am finding out about the concerns of people's lives. So I pass by one woman who tells me, 'Rabbi, pray for my son. He's in intensive care.' Another woman says, 'You know, Rabbi, if I should get sick, I don't want them to put me on any of those machines.' I communicate her wishes to the rest of the care team."

Friedman is the co-chair and founder of the Center's medical ethics committee. "What I found is that some people want to die. We've worked to transform the Center's medical decision-making policies so that now residents have the right to make decisions for themselves, to accept or refuse any or all treatments.

"A few days ago I helped the sister of a resident make a decision about a feeding tube for her sibling. The doctor had said, 'Do you want your sister to die?' I reframed it: 'What would Fanny tell us if she was able to express her wishes?' That was a question the sister could struggle towards answering without guilt."

Friedman is the middle child in a German-Jewish, Reform family from Denver. At Brandeis, where she was an undergraduate, she helped lead Sabbath services at a nursing home, and she started an "Adopt-a-Grandparent" program.

That Friedman's own maternal grandmother was an important force in her life is almost a tautology. "My Grammy Anne was loving, fabulous. She had spunk. She began college at the age of 81. She certainly gave me the message that old people are vital and capable of renewal. Often, working here, I think, 'Grammy would be very proud of me.'"

Still, at a rabbinic convention soon after Friedman was ordained, she had "one of the worst professional experiences of my life. People looked stricken when I told them where I worked...as if something were terribly wrong with me. It really wounded me." Today, she

Dayle Friedman

Anthony B. Wood

says, "I'm secure about my choice, certain about the importance of my work and about how well it suits me."

Friedman hopes that her future includes marriage and family as well as continued writing and teaching on Jewish geriatric issues. "What I've learned from old people is that what matters most in the end are the answers to two questions: Who did you love, and how?"

Marketing Jewish-Arab Businesses

"Nobody ever forgets meeting me, because in the business world in Israel a woman stands out," says Sarah Kreimer, director of the Center for Jewish-Arab Economic Development, a not-for-profit organization that she founded in 1988, and the only organization of its kind in Israel. Kreimer's organization is a shining model for successful Israeli-Arab cooperation.

Based in Tel Aviv, the 100-member organization creates opportunities for Jewish and Arab businesspeople to work together and provides start-up capital for new, Jewish-Arab business ventures and Arab businesses that contribute to the development of the local Arab economy. "The country needs to maximize its economic development," says Kreimer. "Also, Jews and Arabs really have no choice. We have to find ways to live together that benefit both sides." Kreimer speaks fluent Hebrew and conversational Arabic, and her thinking, she says, "runs more to human connections than to profits and losses."

Prominent Jewish and Arab businessmen, including a former Governor of the Bank of Israel (the chair) and a leading Arab industrialist, sit on the Center's 12-member Board of Directors. Last year, 200 business people attended the Center's conference "Meeting the Challenges of the 90's through Economic Cooperation," five new Jewish-Arab business ventures got underway, and Kreimer secured $400,000 to create a revolving loan fund for approximately ten new business ventures and expansions. Working alongside Kreimer are two staff members, an Arab doing outreach work and a Jew, an economist, managing the loan fund. Ten active members regularly volunteer to lead seminars and give entrepreneurial advice.

"Our businesses include everything from cement block manufacturing to olive oil production," says Kreimer, 36, in a telephone interview from the Jerusalem hotel where she and her Sabra husband, Shuki (a high school math and physics teacher) and their 2-week-old, Shai Benjamin, were living until the Persian Gulf War ended and they could return to their house in Bat Yam. "One recent business is a joint venture between a kibbutz industry and an Arab entrepreneur to manufacture a new line of socks."

A constant stream of challenges—the Persian Gulf War, pressure to hire Russian Jews, the wobbly Israeli economy—make Arab-Jewish connections difficult. "I'm stubborn," Kreimer says, "and I have a tremendous belief that this cooperative economic path is the right direction for Israel. I feel what you might call a *mission* to be able to use my training in this way."

Debbi Cooper

Sarah Kreimer

A tall, unpretentious Yale graduate who majored in Russian studies and who spends her spare time hiking and writing poetry, Kreimer's manner is quiet and open but determined. With a Master's degree and community organizing experience in Providence, Kreimer comes well-trained to the job.

Growing up in Pittsburgh, she was interested both in Jewish life (as president of her temple youth group) and in community organizing. A high school urban planning course and an internship with the Pittsburgh Department of Urban Planning were important early career determinants. In 1980, Kreimer volunteered to do community development work in a poor Israeli neighborhood as part of UJA's Project Renewal. The following year she joined Interns for Peace (an organization that fosters understanding between Israeli Arabs and Jews through community work), spending two years in Tamra, an Arab village in the Galilee. "I decided I wanted to work in the field of Jewish-Arab relations. Just being in Israel felt meaningful to me. I like

the closeness and immediacy of life here."

Kreimer believes that the underemployment of capable Arabs perpetuates the large gap between the Arab and Jewish standards of living, and that Arab underemployment is a waste of Israel's main resource—people. Unlike the segregated schools and residential neighborhoods in Israel, "there are many successful examples of Jews and Arabs *working* together, not as equals, but at least there's positive contact. That's a start. Many Arabs are on the threshold of a lot of development. I'm convinced that an organization like the Center can make a difference."

These days, most of Kreimer's 60-hour, six-day work week is spent on the phone. This morning, she has "tried to finalize arrangements for El Al to serve baklava produced by an Arab in Nazareth," and she's started plans with some Arab and Jewish medical professionals to establish a collaborative medical center in the Galilee.

The hardest part of the job is "the constant sense of not knowing whether we're doing well or poorly. Having no yardstick makes things hard." Still, Kreimer imagines that the Center can eventually become a major investment company and the nucleus for a Middle-Eastern Development Corporation.

Her current plans? Mostly a three-month maternity leave.

Singing to Save Yiddishkeit

Judaism is a hard nut to crack," says Adrienne Cooper, 44, feminist Yiddish singer, co-founder of the immensely successful Yiddish folk arts adult camp (called Klezcamp), and leader of the all-female klezmer band, Vilde Khaye ("Wild Thing"). "People with Jewish literacy skills—like davening or studying Talmud—can crack that nut. But others can't. I'm committed to broadening the definition of Jewish literacy to include artistic, expressive endeavors. There are places to go to learn Talmud, but how many places are there to learn Jewish artistic vocabulary? Teaching songs is a way that I help spread Jewish emotional literacy."

Cooper, who has also been the assistant director of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and was a founding member of The Joseph Papp Yiddish Theater, adds, "When I teach, I notice who is in front of me—old, young, gay, straight —and then I give the students full access to use the song *for themselves*. In the early 20th century, it may have been thought that "*Alle brider*" ("All brothers") was a nice labor-movement song about unity that included everybody. But one day on the lawn some students of mine added the verse, 'We're all sisters, just like Rachel, Ruth and Esther.'"

"People sing Yiddish folksongs at anti-racist marches in England; at Gay Pride marches they sing '*Vakht oyf*' ("Wake up").These songs give people a way to express themselves *as Jews*."

Cooper's interpretations of songs challenge her students in many ways—intellectually, politically, ethically and emotionally. When she sings "*A meydl in di yorn*"("A woman of some years"), in which the singer asks her boyfriend why he's abandoning her for another woman, Cooper changes the last line to read, "You should have four years of hell," instead of the standard, "Your sweetheart should have four years of hell."

She further explains, "Usually people sing this song sorrowfully. The woman is abandoned, appears to be helpless, calls herself a 'girl'. But she's also trying to get some control over her experience, and the lyrics have her interrogating the guy. I violate the folk tradition—I inflect songs psychologically so that there's really a person in the song. I see the pride that's in here, the rage underneath. I make songs true to Jewish women as I know them. Plus," she adds, "I'm a Jewish woman myself. I sing songs that Jewish women have been singing for maybe 200 years. I've picked up the thread of my own culture. These are *my* songs, sung by *my* mothers—literally and figuratively."

"As a 44-year-old, divorced Jewish woman with a 12-year-old daughter, who comes from a family that has high emotion, a great sense of humor and irony, and a fairly high level of domestic anger and intensity—*all* of this comes with me on to the stage: I don't check it at the door."

Indeed, Cooper is what her students (mostly other professional singers) call a "singer's singer." Though she's a natural soprano, she sings mezzo for its "gutsier" sound. "I think of singing as speaking," she explains. "I tend not to sing high keys and not to sing prettified, because I'm trying to make people hear the words and the direct emotion behind the words. I want people to get close to the material—it has to reflect us—but I also want them to understand the historical moment in which the song was created."

Henry Sapoznik, YIVO's director of song archives, says, "Adrienne wears a song like a Danskin. She really knows Yiddish—the cul-

"I don't check my humor at the door."

Andrea Sperling

Adrienne Cooper

photo missing (Jacky Turchick could not risk being photographed for this article.)

ture, the context of where the song fits. She has the balance of both empathy and great musical skills—the ability to produce a beautiful tone, to know her pitching, how to phrase. She knows her body, how to shape notes. She's centered and never loses her train of thought. The audience always gets this shockingly honest reading of the song. She's a spectacular teacher, full of sympathy, full of great good will. It's really scary how powerfully she feels the song."

Cooper's background includes not only a Yiddish-speaking childhood in Oakland, California (her mother was a Hebrew school teacher and professional opera and Yiddish singer), but university training at Berkeley, Hebrew U., the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem (where she was trained classically in chamber opera, European art songs and German leider) and the University of Chicago where her unfinished doctoral dissertation was on "Yiddish Poets in New York." After a summer language program at YIVO, she says she, "Suddenly saw Yiddish as a potential professional field. I walked into this little world at YIVO where strolling around the building were still Eastern European Holocaust poets, composers, real-life heroes, Resistance fighters. I saw a whole, displaced *world*."

"For a long time," she continues, "I wanted to clean up Jewish experience, to create a more high-minded version of Jewish culture. But then, at some point as I got older, it struck me differently. I suddenly wanted to claim and integrate all of it. Now, there is no ego involvement for me when I perform, no presenting of myself for approval. Rather, there is something that has to come *through* me to the audience."

Currently, her "day job," as she calls it, is as the program director at the Chinatown History Museum in New York. ("I'm interested in institutions that teach and represent a community's culture," she explains. "There are parallel issues here to YIVO that I love.") In the fall, her third recording, "Holocaust Lullabies and Children's Songs," will be released by the U.S. Holocaust Museum. Nights, her all-female, five-member klezmer band continues to act like "*vilde khayes*."

Smuggling Refugees

Jacky Turchick is a 48-year-old potter, art teacher, sometimes school or recreation center artist-in-residence, and mother of four children aged 10 to 25, who lives in Tucson, Arizona, 100 miles from the Mexican border. Since 1982, the focal point of her life has been helping Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees find safety in the United States. Not only has she stuffed envelopes and delivered clothing, but she has repeatedly risked going to jail. Illegally—often twice a week for over six years —she transported refugees from the Mexican border to "sanctuary" in a temple, church or private home.

Although the 1980 Refugee Act stated that people in danger of persecution would not be returned to their country, our government "didn't live up to the Act at all," says Turchick. "Less than 1% of Guatemalans and 2% of Salvadorans were being granted refugee status."

"In the beginning," says Turchick of her early involvement in transporting refugees, "we didn't know we were going to be a sanctuary 'movement.' We were just these people who knew about these other people who needed help."

Turchick was always on call. She would drop everything to leave Tucson at daybreak for a "trip" to the border. Runs could take up to 24

(continued on page 30)

A Weddin
Ceremonies of Inn

by Gina Barkhordar Nahai

News of Solomon the Man's engagement to Peacock, the daughter of Joseph the Winemaker, spread faster and incited more animosity in Esfahan and Juyy Bar than any other incident in recent memory. In the ghetto, mothers of eligible young women dug their nails into their cheeks and mourned. Matchmakers ran to each other in a fury as they tried to discover which one of them had made the deal. Young men despaired at the thought of having Solomon removed from the circle of womanizing and debauchery that had become the object of all their fantasies.

Ever since Joseph the Winemaker had announced her engagement, Peacock had cried and begged and sworn she would not marry. It was preposterous—that Peacock should refuse the man everyone wanted.

He sent to Kashan for his mother to come and take charge of the festivities. She arrived a week later, a big woman with light skin and nothing of the good looks that had blessed her son. She sat in the carriage she had hired with Solomon's money, complaining of the heat and the dust of the desert. She arrived at the city's gates and was forced to disembark for no Jew could ride through town. She had come with her daughters, all eleven of them, and with another, darker than the rest and even uglier, whom she claimed was an orphan she had raised from childhood. Ghadereh Khanum—the Able One—stayed in

in Persia: nce and Experience

Solomon's house for a week and held court. She sat with her daughters around the receiving room. In Kashan they had been rug weavers. They had lived in a hovel and worked from the age of three, sitting cross-legged in front of wooden frames onto which they tied minuscule knots of wool and silk. And they would have worked till their eyes were blind and their lungs rotted from inhaling wool, except Solomon the Man had made them rich. Now they sat in his house and snubbed the visitors who came to offer their welcome.

At the end of the week of greeting, the Able One and her daughters paid a surprise visit to Peacock's house. As was customary, they arrived early in the morning, before Peacock could have a chance to comb her hair or hide her faults in deceiving clothes.

The Able One and her daughters stayed all morning. They inspected Peacock, commented on the thickness of her skin and the darkness of her gums, remarked that her hips were so narrow no child could ever come through them alive. They made Peacock walk from one side of the courtyard to the other so they could see her stride, examined her knees and complained that she was too thin—not fed well by her parents.

To the people of Juyy Bar, Peacock's wedding to Solomon the Man marked the end of the Great Famine of 1871. For although the earth did not yield a healthy crop for another decade, and although their poverty would become worse in the years to come, the three days and nights of celebration at Solomon's home managed to create in the minds of even the harshest of skeptics a lasting illusion of

"God forbid," she said. "No woman like her could stay on the path of righteousness."

comfort, and a collective memory of never-ending wealth.

It began at dawn on a Monday, and did not end until after midnight on Wednesday. In between, the men gathered in Solomon's house and ate and drank and danced to the music of seven groups of entertainers he had imported from as far as Tehran and Rasht. They ate eggs and honey and sweetbread and halva for breakfast, drank cool essence of cherries and snacked on apples stewed in rosewater until noon, then feasted on roasted lamb, bread, rice, and golden cookies for lunch. In the afternoon, bands of musicians played, acrobats danced in the courtyard, and old storytellers recited verses from the book of kings while poets repeated the verses of Omar Khayyam. Before sunset, Joseph the Winemaker walked from room to room and poured Persian wine and Russian Vodka into everyone's cup. By the time Homa the Ricemaker served dinner, the men were all drunk.

On the women's side, the celebrations were more solemn but just as extravagant. As tradition dictated, they gathered at the house of Joseph the Winemaker, where Solomon the Man had paid all expenses. The Able One and her eleven daughters hosted the affair. On the first of the three days of celebration, they took Peacock for a marriage bath.

They left in the dark, equipped with food, nuts, and candy, jugs of cool drinks, and, most important, chunks of henna. In the bath, the Able One took Peacock into the well and watched as she performed the rites of purity. Then everyone came inside, around the pool, and undressed. A band of female musicians, courtesy of Solomon the Man, performed in the nude. Pari the Henna came forward, clicking her tongue to sound a cheer that echoed through the bath until it became deafening. She gave Peacock a dimpled smile and a reassuring pat, admired her beauty and remarked on her youth, then set about "turning her into a woman."

She tied the ends of two long threads around her thumb and forefinger, put the threads to Peacock's eyebrows, catching each hair and plucking them, until she had created two arched lines. Then she plucked Peacock's legs and thighs, the hair on her vulva and armpits. Finally she prepared a mold of henna, which she placed on the bride's fingernails and toenails, and on her hair. The other women, cheering, began to dye their own hair.

On Tuesday the women gathered at the winemaker's house to bless the bride. They brought Peacock into the courtyard and put her in a translucent chador made of gold thread. Grudgingly, while her daughters shed tears of envy, the Able One extended to Peacock the gifts Solomon had sent for her: a dozen gold chains, a sapphire necklace, turquoise earrings, and a diamond bracelet. Everyone gasped in awe. The Able One took out a bag of gold coins and placed a crystal bowl into Peacock's lap. One by one she pressed the coins against Peacock's forehead, letting each one stick momentarily—for luck, so that from now on the bride's forehead would be marked with joy and prosperity. Then Peacock bent her head and dropped the coin into the bowl as coal stoves burned wildrue seeds and smoke filled the air.

On the third day a delegation of women visited Solomon's house to arrange the bridal room. They spread the bed toward Jerusalem—ensuring that a son would be conceived of the first intercourse. Inside the sheets they sprayed rosewater, spread jasmine and rose petals. Above the pillows they put a white handkerchief that Solomon the Man would have to rub in Peacock's blood and present after the intercourse.

In the afternoon, Raab Yahya called at Solomon's house to perform the first half of the ceremony. Solomon the Man was bathed and shaved, dressed in a Western suit and hat. He repeated the vows and then raised his cup in celebration.

"Bring her to me," he toasted.

Then Pari the Henna left Solomon the Man's house to carry the bridal gown to the bride.

But in the house of Joseph the Winemaker, Peacock's mother Leyla was running from room to room, flushed and frantic, the other women were searching every corner, and rumors had begun to circulate that the bride was missing; she had disappeared sometime before noon, and no one could imagine where to look for her.

Joseph the Winemaker paced every inch of the ghetto and at last found his daughter in Mullah Mirza's basement which had been empty and abandoned since Muhammad the Jew's Massacre. Peacock sat there terrified by her own defiance, terrified also by the walls that reeked of poison and the smell of Mullah Mirza's dismay. Still, when Joseph grabbed her, she held his hand and begged that he call off the marriage.

"Solomon the Man," she cried, "will leave me."

Joseph the Winemaker took his daughter home and dressed her in a pearl-embroidered gown and a veil—a gift from Zil-el-Sultan's harem—made entirely of silver and gold threads. He saw her wear the jewels Solomon had given her, and fought back his own tears of joy.

"Believe in luck," he whispered to Peacock as he took her before Raab Yahya.

When the wedding ceremony was over, a caravan of women walked from the winemaker's house to that of Solomon the Man. Peacock rode in front, mounted on Solomon's black horse. At the top of the alley leading to the house, she stopped and waited for messengers to announce her arrival to the groom.

"What if they know she ran away?" Leyla asked Joseph, who trembled at the possibility.

But in Solomon's house the sound of music and laughter had never ceased, and the matter of the bride's disappearance was quickly forgotten. When they heard that the bride was about to arrive, the men cheered and all seven bands of musicians played at once as women burned espand seeds and threw sugar-laced almonds on the bride's path. Peacock was led into the house and straight to the bridal room, where she would wait for the end of the reception. Leyla took her inside and kissed her good-bye, and then, suddenly, Peacock was alone.

She stood erect, looking ahead, and tried to gather the courage she had lost along the way. She told herself she was not going to stay, that no one could force her to stay. She reminded herself of the dream she had had; an old woman, alone and brokenhearted, walking the streets of an unfamiliar town and crying Solomon's name. In the dream, Peacock knew that she was the old woman.

She looked around the room. The walls were plastered white, the ceiling decorated with hand-painted moldings. There was a window in this room. Peacock remembered the house of Muhammad the Jew.

"But I won't stay," she reminded herself.

She could smell food from outside.

"When he comes in, I will tell him he has to send me back. 'You keep whores,' I will say. 'I don't want a man who keeps whores.'"

She waited, but hours passed and her legs became numb from standing, and still the sound of laughter had not ceased in the house. She sat on the floor, her chador around her, and found herself admiring the softness of her dress, the shine of her jewels, the beauty of her veil. She put her head on a cushion away from the bed and fell asleep.

She dreamt that the door opened and a man came into the room. He was tall, with long arms, and the smell of rain on his clothes. He brought with him a piece of the moonlit sky.

She dreamt that he stood above her, looking, then bent down and lifted her from the ground to place her on the bed. She thought he was about to unveil her, that she should stop him, but he touched her and she was not afraid anymore. He took off her veil.

He stared at her—his eyes submerged in the blue light of dawn—and then he reached to the bottom of the bed and pulled a white sheet, as cool as the wind that came before every rain, over her body. He left. Without him the room was vast and empty.

Peacock sat up, jolted by the sound of the morning namaz, and looked about. She was still burned from last night's anger. She remembered her dream. She saw the white sheet that covered her. Solomon the Man, she realized, had seen her.

She stood up on the mattress and searched her clothes for blood. She looked on the sheets. There was no stain. She breathed with relief; he had not touched her. Then she realized why: he had seen her face, and decided she was too ugly to touch. She picked up her chador and walked out.

"Good morning," a voice greeted her on the porch. Solomon's eyes were full of sleep. His face was unshaved. He sat on the steps, smoking his water pipe and watching the sunrise.

"You wake up early," he said.

Peacock froze. She was disarmed by his casual manner, his smile. She thought his eyes played with her.

"I sent everyone home last night," he said. "I told them, 'My wife is asleep and I will wait for her.' Your father insisted I do the job. He's afraid I will change my mind about the marriage."

Peacock took a step back.

"No need for that," she answered. "I will go myself."

He raised an eyebrow and smiled.

"Where to?"

"Anywhere." But she had already lost her conviction. "Somewhere. I can't stay here. You keep whores."

Solomon the Man laughed and reached for her. She thought she would pull away, but she could not.

"You have married me." He picked her up off her ground. "You can't just leave someone you married."

He opened the door and walked in. She wanted to fight him, but he put her down and slowly opened the braids of her hair, undoing the string of pearls and letting each one fall into the bed of withering roses and dying jasmine, and then he took off her shoes and her gown, and lay her naked on the sheets and made love to her as if she were indeed a woman—as if he had chosen her knowingly, as if she were pretty, and desired, and worthy of his touch. Afterwards he lay next to her and watched her cry—from the shock of encounter, perhaps, or the relief of being accepted, and then he kissed her and pulled the sheets back over her and told her to sleep.

"You are beautiful."

She heard his voice and wondered if he had lied and prayed she would never know. She saw him leave and missed his smell and his touch and the sound of his laughter. She fell asleep and dreamt of his eyes and loved him all her life.

From Cry of the Peacock by Gina Barkhordar Nadai. Reprinted by permission of Crown Publishers, Inc.
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Sexy Lyrics From the Bible

A new translation of *The Song of Songs* by Marcia Falk

This poem corresponds to chapter 5:2 through chapter 6:3 of *The Song of Songs.* Marcia Falk, the Anaïs Nin of biblical erotica, has composed lyric lines that are spectacularly different from standard Bible translations. Lean, raw, intoxicating, they are also suffused with Falk's literary perfect pitch. Even her 115 pages of scholarly notes convey the crazed forgetfulness of loving. Falk's *Song of Songs* should be a required possession of lovers. *(Note: Passages spoken by a female voice are in roman typeface, the passage spoken by a male voice is in italic, and passages spoken by a group of women are in capitals.)*

I sleep, but my heart stirs,
restless,
and dreams...
My lover's voice here, at the door–

Open, my love, my sister,
my dove, my perfect one,
for my hair is soaked with the night.

Should I get up, get dressed,
and dirty my feet?
My love thrusts his hand at the latch
and my heart leaps for him!
I rise to open for my love,
my hands dripping perfume on the lock–
I open,
but he has gone.
I run out after calling him, calling,
but he is gone.
The men who roam the streets,
guarding the walls,
beat me and tear away my robe.
O women of the city,
Swear to me!
If you find my lover
You will say
That I am sick with love.

WHO IS YOUR LOVE
AND WHY DO YOU BIND US BY OATH?

My love is radiant
As gold or crimson,
Hair in waves of black
Like wings of ravens.
Eyes like doves, afloat
Upon the water,
Bathed in milk, at rest
On brimming pools.
Cheeks like beds of spices,
Banks of flowers,
Lips like lilies, sweet
And wet with dew.
Studded with jewels, his arms
Are round and golden,
His belly smooth as ivory,
Bright with gems.
Set in gold, his legs,
Two marble columns–
He stands as proud as cedars
In the mountains.
Man of pleasure– sweet
To taste his love!
Friend and lover chosen
For my love.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN,
WHERE HAS YOUR LOVER GONE TO?
WHERE HAS HE GONE?
WE'LL HELP YOU LOOK FOR HIM.

My love has gone to walk
Within his garden–
To feed his sheep and there
To gather flowers.
I turn to meet my love,
He'll turn to me,
Who leads his flock to feed
Among the flowers.

Excerpted from The Song of Songs: A New Translation and Interpretation *by Marcia Falk.*

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SPRING BREAK. BUDAPEST. DAUGHTER VS. DAD

by Estelle White

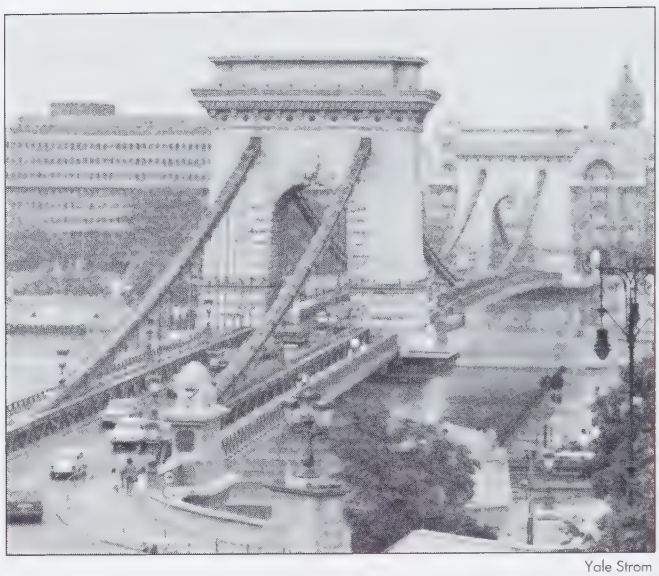
A whole week in Hungary. I couldn't sleep. It was 5 a.m., and I was wide awake. From my room, I could hear my father snoring. How did Nicole put up with it?

The first few hours of our plane ride to Hungary had been fine. I found three empty seats and passed out. Then more passengers boarded the plane in Vienna, so I had to go back and sit with Dad and my stepmother. "Your hair looks nice long," Nicole told me. "It looks much better than that awful haircut you had before," my Dad added, and then proceeded to tell me how unfeminine I had looked with my hair so short. Didn't he know that I cut it short because of him? That I no longer wanted to be Dad's little girl?

After Dad's comment on the plane I wanted immediately to chop my hair off again. But then I thought, "That's stupid. I'm eighteen now. I can grow my hair long."

I remember at the age of nine becoming really angry with my father. I found out then that he never changed my diapers when I was a baby, never fought to take custody over us. Always expected my mom to stay home and not pursue a career. It was at this point that I began to rebel. At twelve, I was fiery, calling my father a male chauvinist pig, trying to provoke some emotional response from him. But it never came. He always seemed cold and uncaring. I would scream, yell, cry; he would tell me that I was being too dramatic.

Years went by. I avoided my father as much as possible. I hardly saw him at all. I would go to his house and be a Sunday night dinner guest. After two hours I would leave and lead my life. I thought I didn't need a father.



Yale Strom

At seventeen, I stopped rebelling. He was not going to understand my work at the Washington D.C. rape crisis center, or the women's group that I lead. I would never understand his views on women. I wanted to learn to accept our differences, to salvage what little sense we had left of being father and daughter.

Dad remarried, and I learned from my stepmother that, yes, my father did love me, and yes, he was proud of me. Nicole tried to explain him. "He had a very difficult childhood. He didn't have the childhood you have." At that point, I became willing to read up on the Holocaust. I wanted to learn about Hungary, too—about anything that would help me understand him.

So. . . seven days in Budapest.

It's 6 a.m. . . no one will be up for hours. I decide to take a walk and explore the Danube.

"Run away, turn away, run away. . ." Bronski Beat blares into the earphones of my Walkman. The breeze from the water chills me. No one around except a few construction workers and a few fishermen back from an early morning catch. I look at the Danube. Where so many Jews were sent to die. All lined up, their backs to the river. I picture my grandmother standing there. Perhaps she looked like me.

My father told me a story once, about how he and his mother were taken off a streetcar because their documents showed that they were Jewish. They were taken to this river to be shot. My dad was six. He remembers a German soldier beating an elderly Jewish man with a club. Dad saw the old man's skull split open. My grandmother covered the man's head with her handkerchief so that he wouldn't be humiliated as he died.

How much more happened here to my Dad that I cannot fathom? How many bodies were there floating down this river in trails of blood?

My grandmother did not die that day at the Danube; a guard took pity on her. Nor did she die in the slave labor camp, nor, amazingly, during other tribulations.

Walking back to the flat, I saw that the apartment buildings still had bullet holes in them; no one had fixed the damage. Was it that people had no money? Or that they didn't want to forget the past?

My Walkman blared on: "Mother will never understand why you have to leave, but the answers you seek will never be found at home...."

Was this song about Dad? He left everything here. On November 29, 1956, he escaped to Austria, then made it to America. He was eighteen; my age. He didn't speak English. He didn't know where he would go in America.

He must have been so scared. In the States he lived with a family that took in refugees, and he worked at a supermar-

ket. He got a scholarship to Harvard, graduated in the top ten percent of his class in three years, then Harvard Law School. Perhaps that part sounds, to others, like the American dream.

I'm eighteen; could I leave home now and never look back? My eyes fill with tears as I stare at the pavement that leads me back to the flat. I want to run to my father as I did when I was a very little girl, full of love and admiration. I want to replace his pain....But so much has passed between Dad and me; a simple hug cannot bring back what has been lost between us.

I'm 18. Could I leave home and never look back?

A few days passed, and I saw more of Budapest. My cousin Anico took me all over the city and showed me the "modern" side. We saw breakdancers and musicians, huge contemporary stores, ambient sidewalk cafes where we drank Blue Curacao and orange juice. I forgot about the bloody Danube, the bullet holes all around.

One night Dad came home after visiting the apartment he'd been raised in. He told me about the day he was six when the Germans came and forced his family to leave. His parents were sent off to slave labor camps; a neighbor delivered him to his grandparents. He lived in a hospital bomb shelter, extremely sick with para-typhoid fever. One day bombs hit all around the shelter. He waited for his bomb, but it never came.

After the Russians liberated Budapest, my father returned home. Another family was eating off my dad's family's china; another child was playing with his toys. I wonder what my dad felt then. How much pain? I felt so sad for him.

My father and I walked down the street to get coffee at a little cafe. Dad ordered a special pastry full of sweetened poppy seeds. He said it was the kind his mother used to bake for him when he was a child. It was nice to know there had been happy times.

Suddenly I remembered happy times of my own with Dad. That when I was little he invited my brother and me over every week, cooked for us before he remarried, planned camping and ski vacations, chose special presents for us on every trip he took. He wasn't just someone who forbade Mom to have a career, who never changed my diapers. Why did I never remember these nice things?

For the first time I wanted desperately to understand him. I told him that I was trying to piece together what had happened in his past, that I wanted things to be better for us, that I wanted to communicate more with him. To my surprise, he agreed.

He told me about the first time he returned to Hungary, in 1983. He walked around his childhood neighborhood; the park he used to play in was gone, his father's store had been torn down and replaced with a warehouse.

My father told me he cried that day. That he had walked through the streets of Budapest crying because everything that he remembered was gone. I couldn't imagine my father crying. Why didn't I know this side of him?

Then we talked for two hours about the Holocaust, about being Jewish, about the Hungarian Revolution. He told me about the time his crying prevented some Russian soldiers from raping his mother. Dad said the soldiers couldn't stomach it with a little child crying.

He told me about escaping to Austria in a Red Cross bus, but being told that the Russians would shoot them at the border. My Dad got off the bus and walked ten hours through the forest at night in order to sneak across.

I told my Dad about my emotional walk along the Danube with Bronski Beat blaring in my ears, about my work at the crisis center, about Paul, a boy I had been dating for over a year about whom we rarely spoke.

It was a start.

The rest of the day, I was elated.

That night I dream that I am sitting at the cafe with Dad, and suddenly a man grabs us, and tells us to follow him to a shelter.

Sitting in an underground shelter supplied with a week's worth of food, I realize that it is all happening again. Because we are Jewish, we have to hide. My Dad is crouched like a little boy about twenty feet away from me, his hands covering his face as if in anguish. I have to explain everything to him, to verify for him that it is all happening again. But I know that he will not be able to take it a second time.

In the dream I feel so much love for him, so protective, so close. But when I wake up, a burning sensation fills my chest. There is still so much pain and distance. I feel cast back into an abyss. I will never feel in real life the way I felt in the dream, or felt briefly in a cafe over poppy-seed pastry.

I walk into the kitchen and mechanically pull out the tea pot, three plates and three saucers. I put the kettle on, and begin to set the table. I could prepare breakfast, but I decide not to. The screaming noise from the kettle startles me, and as I look up from the blue and white tiles that cover the kitchen floor, I see my father. He has turned the kettle off.

Estelle White, a pseudonym, is a senior at a college in Massachusetts.

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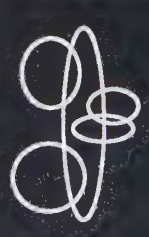

FOOD Facts and Fictions

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THE FOODS OF MOTHER RUSSIA

The new Russian cookbook, *Please to the Table* (Workman, 1990) by Anya von Bremzen and John Welchman shares poignant childhood memories of the wondrous central market in Moscow.

Accompanied by her grandmother, an architect, Anya would sometimes spend whole days in the market, transfixed by a veritable babble of ethnic languages and barter of exotic fruits and vegetables.

A fascinating source that the authors of *Please to the Table* dipped into is the 1870's Russian classic *A Gift to Young Housewives* by Elena Molokhovets. Successfully codifying the Russo-French and traditional Russian recipes of nineteenth-century *cuisine bourgeoisie*, the book was never republished by the Soviets (it was printed in Russian in the United States), and it became a kind of underground Soviet hit.

The most quoted passage offers pre-Russian Revolutionary instructions concerning the correct behavior should guests turn up unexpectedly (which they do as much today as they did in Tolstoy's time): one should dispatch the maid to the cellar, bidding her fetch leftover veal, a few dozen eggs, a jar of caviar. . . and so on. The niceties of nineteenth-century propriety would be rehearsed around a cramped Soviet dining table, against a background of bellowing laughs and elaborate mock preparations. *A Gift to Young Housewives* includes descriptions of food and eating by Chekhov, Tolstoy and Gogol.

Russians in America are homesick for certain foods, report Von Bremzen and Welchman. Fresh sour cherries, fresh currants (red and black), lingonberries, wild strawberries, and tart gooseberries—all so familiar in Russia—are not readily available here. The tart tkemali plum is so greatly mourned in some emigré communities that those with a backyard grow them at home.

Please to the Table is a beautifully published book, a perfect resource for Armenian, Georgian, Baltic, Russian, Ukranian and even Central Asian cuisine.

Here, adapted from the book, is a classic Russian recipe, a must for the hot days of August.

KHOLODNIY BORSHCH

(cold borscht)

1 1/2 lbs. beets trimmed of all but 1" stems
9 c. water
1/4 c. fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs. cider vinegar
1 1/2 Tbs. sugar, or more to taste
Salt & freshly ground black pepper, to taste
3 large potatoes, peeled, boiled & diced.
4 Kirby cucumbers, peeled, seeded & diced
1 c. diced red radishes
3 hard-cooked eggs, chopped
1 c. chopped mixed scallions, dill, & parsley
Sour cream for garnish

1. In a large pot, bring the beets and water to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium low simmer, covered, until the beets are tender, 25 minutes or more, depending on their size.

2. Using a slotted spoon, remove the beets from the liquid and cool until manageable. Peel and grate the beets.

3. Stir the beets back into the liquid. Add the lemon juice, vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper. Simmer for 15 minutes more. Adjust the amount of sugar to taste. Cool the soup, then refrigerate until ready to serve, at least 2 hours.

4. In a large bowl, toss together the potatoes, cucumbers, radishes, eggs, and herbs to mix well.

5. Ladle the soup into bowls. Either spoon about 2 Tbs. of vegetable and egg mixture into each bowl or, as is the custom in Russia, serve it separately in a decorative dish. Serve sour cream on the side.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

CALL FOR POETRY AND PROSE FOR A FORTHCOMING BOOK, WORKING TITLE: WHICH LILITH?

See sample contents below, and submit poetry and BRIEF prose to Henny Wenkart at this address:

Jewish Women's Resource Center
national council of jewish women new york section
9 east 69 street, new york, n.y. 10021 212/535-5900 extension 10 or 11

LILITH

kicked myself out of paradise
left a hole in the morning
no note no goodbye

the man I lived with
was patient and hairy

he cared for the animals
worked late at night
planting vegetables
under the moon

sometimes he'd hold me
our long hair tangled
he kept me from rolling
off the planet

it was
always safe there
but safety

wasn't enough. I kept nagging
pointing out flaws
in his logic

he carried a god
around in his pocket
consulted it like
a watch or an almana c

it always proved
I was wrong

two against one
isn't fair! I cried
and stormed out of Eden
into history:

the Middle Ages
were sort of fun
they called me a witch
I kept dropping
in and out
of people's sexual fantasies

now
I work in New Jersey
take art lessons
live with a cabdriver

he says: baby
what I like about you
is your sense of humor

sometimes
I cry in the bathroom
remembering Eden
and the man with the god
I couldn't live with
–Enid Dame

ADAM

When I feel alone
the air is full of demons
spitting spite and prophesies

You will die young
You will not die young
and your pain will go on and on

Lightheaded
not opening myself to silence
I weaken

and blame another
any other
Lilith for instance calling

her monster-night hag-
seductress (not so unhappy
about that)-goat scourge

gains me nothing
my second wife Eve wants to hear
none of it
–Grace Herman

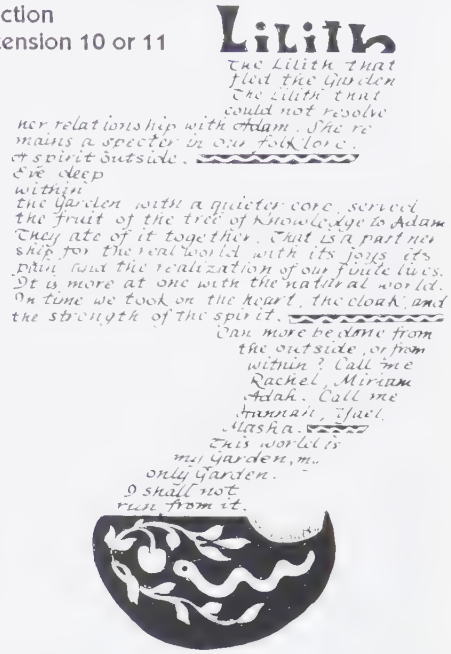
ON CELEBRATING LILITH, FIRST REFUSENIKEH

Free and strong they came together
She and Adam, in the sweet cockcrow
of youth
Aflame for one another, desirous, admiring
Keepers of one another's soul.

Later the staleness of his blood made
a long backwash
Of bitter demons, began to call each de-
mon Lilith
Labeled Lilith the bundle of regret, and
rage, and her,
Shot the whole bundle into outer
darkness.

"I want someone just like myself to
cheer me
Rib of my side, my temperament and
nature."
Out of such gossamer he now constructs
his Eve
All lightness, all compliance and laughter.

No living woman is a man-imagined Eve
or Lilith.
Why stage a celebration of his nightmare
or his dream?
–Henny Wenkart


Lilith
The Lilith that fled the Garden
The Lilith that could not resolve
her relationship with Adam. She re
mains a specter in our folklore,
a spirit outside.
Eve deep
within
the Garden with a quieter core, served
the fruit of the tree of Knowledge to Adam
They ate of it together. That is a part ner
ship for the real world with its joys its
pain and the realization of our finite lives.
It is more at one with the natural world.
In time we took on the heart, the cloak, and
the strength of the spirit.
Can more be done from
the outside, or from
within? Call me
Rachel, Miriam
Adah. Call me
Hannah, Ifael.
Alaska.
This world is
my Garden, my
only Garden.
I shall not
run from it.

WHICH LILITH?

Who is Lilith? Or more to the point, which is the true, real Lilith - the rebel against tyranny or the wild-haired vengeful witch?
–Aviva Cantor

Does Eve have a good life with Adam, exhausted from his hard farm work, continuing (no doubt) to blame her for his troubles? Does Lilith have the more glamorous life: one-night stands with demon lovers, daughters who follow her example? An independent woman, she takes direction from no man, but is forever outside the pain and pleasures of humanity.
–Naomi Goodman

LILITH'S VERSION

Bland paradise, Eden,
only sweet fruit growing on those trees.
Even the forbidden was waxy to the touch
and smelled...nutritious.
No poetry, I'd open up my mouth
and only niceties emerged.
The animals, with their wet, grateful eyes,
seemed bored.
I needed sweat and smoke;
I craved a change of weather,
the restless pull of an ocean.
I chose evolution,
it recognized the animal in me.
As for Adam,
he had a name for everything
except my leaving.
Jewelweed grew in the garden--
he called it impatiens;
that's the closest he came
to understanding me.
–Ona Gritz

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

JEWISH WOMEN IN TIME AND TORAH *by Eliezer Berkovits. Ktav, 1990. 143 pp., $16.95.*

WOMEN AT PRAYER: A HALAKHIC ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUPS *by Avraham Weiss. Ktav, 1990. 147 pp., $16.95.*

THE JEWISH WAY: LIVING THE HOLIDAYS *by Irving Greenberg. Summit, 1988. 463 pp., $24.45.*

Women are a people unto themselves," says the Talmud. Are women part of the Jewish society, members of that community which stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah from God? The rabbis who developed the code of behavior governing the practice of Judaism did not seem to think so. Until recently, women were, as a matter of course, excluded from all areas of Jewish life outside of home and family. Orthodox Jews today still rigidly segregate and discriminate against women in the synagogue, study circles and home observances.

In *Jewish Women in Time and Torah*, Eliezer Berkovits, Orthodox rabbi and former professor of philosophy at Skokie Theological College, challenges the relevance of this position for today's world.

Berkovits suggests three historical phases in the development of the status of women. The first, during biblical times was "Torah-toleration," in which the law reflected what was found in society. The subordinate status of women was permitted, Berkovits explains, though it wasn't actively advocated. Similarly, Judaism acquiesced in slavery (while protecting the slave and restricting the rights of the master) and in animal sacrifice (which Maimonides explained as a concession to the times that should ideally be done away with).

In the second, "Torah-directed," phase (covering basically over two thousand years) the rabbis endeavored to establish the status of women as fully persons, moving away from the perception of them as objects to be used by men. For example, they made radical *halakhic* innovations to improve the rights of wives and daughters in family law. They also stretched the rules of evidence to allow the wives of "missing" husbands to remarry. Instead of the standard minimum of two free male witnesses, the rabbis allowed the testimony of only one person—male or female, slave or free—as sufficient to declare the missing husband dead—an amazing act of legal leniency.

Berkovits sees the next phase as contemporary, in which the entire Jewish community must strive to eliminate altogether the inferior status of women. It is here that he goes far beyond normative Orthodox opinion. He concludes that

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How do you get a job at The New York Times*? Ask Ari Goldman's mother. This is from Ari Goldman's* The Search for God at Harvard *(Random House, 1991):*

Toward the end of my year at the Columbia University Journalism School, I decided to give *The New York Times* one last shot. I returned to Peter Millones, the assistant managing editor, with my journalism degree in hand, and he said that maybe—just maybe—I could have my old copyboy job back. I was shocked. For this I went to journalism school?

I hadn't expected to waltz into *The Times* and be hired as a reporter, but I was hoping for a step up from copyboy. Millones said nothing was available. I couldn't see working as a copyboy again but refused to abandon all hope of working at *The Times*.

I sought my mother's advice. "Is there an empty desk in the newsroom?" she asked.

"Sure," I told her. "There are always empty desks, especially during the summer."

"Well, find an empty desk and sit there."

I took my mother's advice and set up shop at a desk in full view of the Metropolitan Desk editors. I told them I was working on some free-lance assignments (assignments that were not yet assigned) and that I might be available, if they really needed me, to help out. It was a hot summer, and there was a thin reporting staff of prima donnas who did not want to be bothered with the routine fires and murders. I ran all over the city, covering these minor disasters and racing for phones. Eventually, the editors would even let me write the story myself—with no byline, of course. I wasn't even on staff, just helping out.

By the end of the summer, a job as a news clerk on the National Desk opened up. I was the natural choice for it.

there is adequate *halakhic* justification for women to join with men in the Grace after Meals, to obligate themselves to the wearing of *tefillin*, to establish their own prayer groups, and to share with their husbands the *mitzvah* of reciting the *Shabbat Kiddush*. He argues in favor of removing the disabilities placed on women in the spheres of divorce, remarriage, inheritance, and all other areas of personal status.

A second book on the topic of women's legal rights is *Women at Prayer* by Avraham Weiss, rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, an Orthodox congregation in New York City, and adviser to several Orthodox women's prayer groups.

Weiss presents all the *halakhic* sources pertaining to women's prayer groups, and he concludes that–contrary to opinions by many Orthodox rabbis–there are no *halakhic* impediments to women praying together as organized groups. This does not mean, of course, that he sanctions men and women worshipping together as equals, a stance that I regret.

I once attended a Bat Mitzvah at an Orthodox women's prayer group. Since women were running the service, the men were relegated to the back of the room behind a *mechitzah*. Male family friends had to pass up the celebration as there were already nine men there from the family, and one more male would make a minyan. With a male minyan in the room, the women could no longer have their own prayer group. I relished the sight of men sitting at the back, barred from participation, but on second thought, the whole scene seemed terribly sad to me. I cherish the egalitarian inclusion of men and women in my *davvening* community, the feeling of belonging it gives me. Thus I am of two minds about Orthodox, all-women prayer groups.

Still, I welcome the affirmations of Weiss, and of Berkovits, too, not least because of the support they each lend to the Women of the *Kotel*, the women's prayer group struggling to exercise their right to *davven* at the Wall in Jerusalem.

In the third book, Rabbi Greenberg, founder and guiding genius of CLAL (the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership) includes in his version of the Jewish calendar the rediscovered women's holidays of *Rosh Chodesh* (the celebration of the new moon. These holidays not only mark the lunar cycle, but also give Orthodox women (who might feel shut out of the religious and spiritual observance of other days) a unique way to celebrate their womanhood.

LILITH readers will appreciate that Greenberg points out that although it is traditional for male members of the family to attend services on Friday night, "increasingly, more and more women also go, as women expand their participation in the spiritual life of the community."

Perhaps what is most promising about *The Jewish Way* is Greenberg's vision of *halakha* as a still growing and unfolding system, one which can incorporate the insights and adaptations that keep Judaism alive.

Those of us who have been fighting the battle for religious recognition for women in Judaism should be glad to hear the meaningful, though still quite limited, voices of these three Orthodox rabbis.

—Marion Shulevitz

DOWNSHIFTING: REINVENTING SUCCESS ON A SLOWER TRACK

by Amy Saltzman. Harper Collins, 1991. 238 pp., $19.95.

When CBS-TV's "60-Minutes" correspondent Meredith Vieira told her boss that she was expecting a second child, she was given an ultimatum.

The "choice" which she ultimately found untenable: work full time or no time. "You can't work 70, 80 hours a week, spend half your life on a plane, and still be an active parent," she said.

While Vieira should be on the money here, bosses in the last two decades have come to expect those in their employ to work increasingly long hours, foregoing weekend play and even

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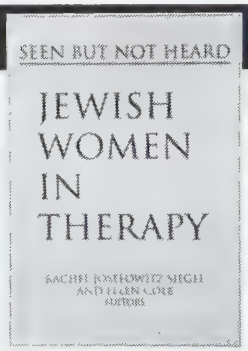

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Tamar Frankiel finds that Jewish cooking is full of birth imagery, and that braided bread is archetypically feminine. This is from The Voice of Sarah *(HarperCollins, 1990):*

In the fall for Rosh Hashanah or Sukkot, we put pomegranates on the table—the fruits filled with seeds which recall nothing so much as a ripe ovary. The seeds represent the 613 mitzvot: [the commandments an observant Jew is instructed to follow] in essence they are like seeds of spiritual light, bursting into the world from its creative source.

Kreplach (traditional on Erev Yom Kippur and Hoshanah Rabbah) are said to cover our sins, but they also suggest a hidden form, like an infant growing in the womb. Poppy seeds at Purim time, just before spring, are the tiny dry seeds awaiting planting—and we hide them in hamantaschen, "Haman's hats," as new life emerging from the shell of evil. Pesach presents us with the impossible—a simple, flat bread as our staple food. But Jews have "risen" to the occasion, thanks to the unique frothing ability of egg whites: the result is the beloved Passover sponge cake. Birth, life, movement, growth are everywhere present.

Bread in Judaism represents the feminine in a special way. For special occasions, we braid it into what is customarily called a "challah." Braiding is an archetypal feminine image, related to weaving, to the web or net, an act which contains and channels energy. As we may "do up" our hair into braids or circles, channeling the energy of our auras, or as we dance together in intricate steps and rhythms, weaving in circles, so we make elaborate chains of the springy dough. We establish the channels through which energy will run, anchoring it down, shaping it into gracious and powerful forms.

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summer vacations for the good of the company. According to Amy Saltzman, author of *Downshifting*—which is a look at how individuals can balance work, recreation and family without selling their souls to the marketplace—a 1988 poll revealed that the average American work week jumped from under 41 hours in 1973, to almost 47 hours in 1988. Professionals currently put in an average of 52 hours, she says. Worse still, leisure time took a severe beating, down 37 percent over the 15 years studied.

The ideology, says Saltzman, goes something like this. "If we weren't always moving ahead and aiming for something higher and more impressive, if we didn't have the look of constantly being busy and in motion, we were somehow boring or losers."

What many have lost, of course, is the ability to relax and appreciate the beauty and joy of an evening alone or with friends. We've forgotten how pleasant it can be to pore over homework with a child, or to sit on a front porch or fire escape listening to nothing at all. Countless people—and we all know them—have come to acknowledge this loss, and convey their resentment over the impossible juggling they feel forced to do. So what can be done? Saltzman outlines five "downshifting" strategies for individuals to consider—Backtracking: moving down the ladder of success, essentially settling into a self-imposed demotion; Career Shifting: taking skills learned in a high-stress job and applying them to a less competitive field; Plateauing: staying in a comfortable position or accepting only lateral moves, in order to keep tasks manageable; Self-employment: going it alone, or with like-minded colleagues, and setting your own rules; Urban escape: moving out of the city, settling into a more serene environment where the ambience dictates a less hectic way of life.

While Saltzman interviewed more than 100 people who have successfully taken these paths to saner living, the focus on individual adaptation—with nary a mention of collective strategies for changing how we organize and view work—makes *Downshifting* somewhat incomplete. Furthermore, in failing to mention the down side (these strategies can fail), Saltzman oversimplifies a complex problem.

One need only remember that Meredith Vieira, attempting to backtrack, was sacked by CBS. Similarly, would-be entrepreneurs often fail, and end up navigating the bankruptcy courts. And barely middle-class families cannot always forego the wage hikes a promised promotion will bring when facing elder care, college tuition and day-care costs.

Nonetheless, there is much of value in Saltzman's book. *Downshifting* will resonate long after it is read, making us question our work styles and work ethics. Its basic premise—that workers can say no to demands or expectations they deem unreasonable—empowers and inspires. So does its belief that work needs to take its place as part of life, not as the be-all and end-all of human existence. Unions, staff associations and people who care about the quality of work-life will find *Downshifting* hearty food for creative and urgently needed thought and debate.

—Eleanor J. Bader

EXILE IN THE PROMISED LAND: A MEMOIR *by Marcia Freedman. Firebrand, 1990. 234 pp., $8.95.*

She could have been any one of us, a transplanted American fresh out of graduate school, moving to Israel in July of 1967 with her husband and young daughter, trying to adjust to a new land where women's roles were still defined in all-too-familiar ways despite the lip service Israel's pioneers had paid to redefining traditional gender expectations.

But here's the twist. As we identify with Freedman's struggles to correct the sexist ideas of her neighbors, then of her larger community in Haifa, the drama takes an extraordinary turn. Because of the peculiarities of Israel's system of political representation by parties, Freedman, active in local politics, wins a parliamentary seat in Israel's Knesset in 1974. As the third of three representatives of Shulamith Aloni's new Citizens Rights Movement, Marcia Freedman finds herself in 1974 driving to Jerusalem with Aloni and Aloni's brother-in-law (also catapulted into the Knesset) for her swearing-in ceremony. This is the book that gives us—as none has before—the "You were there" experience of an American-born woman stalking through the corridors of power in Israel.

How does a '60's-style hippie decide what clothes to don for her swearing-in? (A long tweed skirt and a turtleneck sweater "that was all right for academe but a little too tight for politics.") Will she remember the Hebrew words for the oath of office, taken individually in front of her fellow Knesset members, almost all men of middle age or older and almost all uncomfortable with her presence as a woman, a younger person, a decidedly left-of-center peacenik? ("I was about to take an oath of office that would bind me irrevocably to the state of Israel and I didn't even know all the words.") And how will she later reconcile their condescending pleasantries with the fact that these nice men vote against legislation protecting women from domestic violence and from unjust abortion and divorce laws? (She's spoken of, in Hebrew, as, "the American, the crazy feminist.")

It's in the details of her political confrontations, both with Aloni (no feminist, Freedman would assert) and with the men around her (even those as liberal as she on some issues) that we are privileged to have an insider's view of Israeli politics. And even though the political landscape has changed considerably from what it was in the `70`s when she left office, the struggles over women's rights, which she fearlessly championed, still continue. One needs only to follow LILITH's news columns in *Kol Ishah* to recognize that abortion rights are still a political football in Israel, and that the ugly attitudes Freedman faced two decades ago are still present in the minds of men who equate women's desire to pray as a group at the Western Wall with "whorishness."

Along with the political mapping out here, there is another text as well. Freedman tells unsparingly of the alterations in her personal landscape, her shift in sexual identity as she and her husband dissolve their marriage and she comes out as a lesbian, does not run for a second term in Knesset and becomes active in creating what became icons in the nascent Israeli feminist movement: the Haifa women's bookstore, consciousness-raising groups, a rape crisis center, the Women's Aid Fund.

One of the recollections most revealing of the differences between Israel and the United States, between Berkeley (where Freedman has lived since the early 1980's) and Haifa, is the reaction of Freedman's teenage daughter, who chose to live with her father in California as Freedman was wrestling with whether or not to stay in Israel. Her daughter, who had been uncomfortable with her mother's notoriety and outspoken lesbianism and feminism in Israel, reports that in Berkeley, "You're a heroine."

—Susan Weidman Schneider

Marion Shulevitz, a Conservative rabbi, is staff chaplain at Hospital for Special Surgery and New York Hospital in New York City. Eleanor J. Bader is a writer, teacher and editor who frequently writes for feminist and progressive publications.

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Dear Harold Bloom,

In your recent, sensational *The Book of J* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1990) you theorize that J, the "master" storyteller in Hebrew Scriptures, was a woman. [The notion of "J" arises from a well-accepted theory that the Torah is composed of several strands from different writers: J, E, P, D and finally R, the redactor who wove it all together.] It is thought that we owe to J such beautiful, astonishing biblical tales as the garden of Eden, Joseph and the coat of many colors, and Moses on Sinai.

You say that J creates as a character a Yahweh who is "an antithetical imp or sublime mischief-maker, in no way morally or spiritually superior to the builders of Babel. J's Yahweh," you contend, "is a child... a powerful and uncanny male child, and he throws down what we build up."

You claim that J is "not a religious writer," and you do not take the biblical text seriously as religious expression. But I argue that by eliminating belief in the supernatural as a dimension of J's world view from your perception of the text, you do not realize that the butt of J's irony, the element of her style you most admire ("J essentially *is* a comic author," you write) is arrogant men who behave as if they are gods.

WAS THE WRITER J A VICTIM OF RAPE AND INCEST?

You imagine what J's creation story might have looked like *before* the redactor replaced it with the version we now have, and your invented cosmogony reads like the creation of a sensitive, exuberant little boy who feels overwhelmed by his mother. The child's Yahweh, a mighty projection of himself, of yourself, hurls phallic weapons, lightning and sword, subduing the feminine: the watery deeps which threaten to engulf him. A single blow and he eliminates a subservient male rival, Leviathan, while the Morning Stars sing, like women greeting a hero.

May I playfully conjecture the function of this cosmology in your life? The boy emerges as victor against what for him is the awesome, unruly feminine. This imaginative release allows the seasoned man to invent a J who is a female double of himself: a woman colleague with a wry sense of humor, part of an elite institution, somewhat alienated from the current political situation and from religion. Irreverent in her depiction of Yahweh, her deity is an imp—something like you yourself.

While readers may delight in your thesis that J is an ironic woman, part of your purpose is clearly blasphemy. You tweak the noses of biblical scholars; you tease feminists by presenting the greatest storyteller of the bible as a woman who in her urbane sophistication cares little about issues of injustice and oppression; you bait believers.

Still, I think there is value in imagining that J is a woman. I imagine that, too.

I envision her as a daughter of David, and as the Court Historian. Princesses of the ancient Near East are sometimes described as writers. As the Bible says, both Jezebel and Esther wrote (I Kings 21:8; Esther 9:29). We also have copies of letters and prayers from the hand of the princess/priestess Enheduanna who wrote a thousand years before J. In wall paintings, women in Egypt are depicted as scribes.

J's stories mock heroic types, but they also display compassion (as with Esau's grief on losing the blessing). She introduces women like Sarah, Lot's daughters, Rebekah, Tamar, Ruth and Naomi, who in order to survive under life-threatening circumstances use female trickster-means (typical of goddesses) to see that Yahweh's blessing is nourished. She features complicated men, like Joab in his relations with David.

My J's transcendent, affectionately ironic stance arises from her mature appreciation of the different perceptions of men and women in the patriarchal culture of her time. J's stories arise not from an essential, natural difference between women and men, but from the way a woman bred and schooled in a male-dominated culture might view men, especially heroic types, from the underside.

To me, J's "affectionate irony" arises from an appreciation of human vulnerability and encompasses a healing sense of ambiguities. She understands that the pursuit of justice, cooperation, compassion and peaceful resolutions takes ironic turns in a world governed by imperious men. The power of her vision arises perhaps because she's a person who has endured suffering (maybe as a victim of rape and incest), who in recovering wrote the history of her family and nation from their beginning in Eden.

My J's perception of Yahweh is different from that of her father, the psalm-writer, King David. My J has a subversive voice, that of a worshipper of a Yahweh who invigorates and sustains all living. From this perspective, J satirizes those who confuse charismatic David or themselves with Yahweh.

I propose that J, one of the earliest voices we hear in Hebrew Scriptures, may be Tamar, the daughter of David.

B'shalom Oovrachah,
Adrien Janis Bledstein

Adrien Janis Bledstein leads Torah study in Chicago, and is completing a book: Divine Satire and the Bible's "Master" Storyteller.

(continued from page 6)
enough; this projection includes our own self-judgement, and makes us either undermine our sense of self or turn from Jewish community.

There is also the issue of how to define the self. Traditional therapy focuses on an individual's exploration and healing; its very bias runs counter to the bias of Jewish culture, which is toward the collectivity. Not that the individual should be sacrificed to the community, but that the individual is profoundly connected to the community, so profoundly that separation is not truly possible without extreme loss.

> "Jews have fuzzy boundaries. . . even one's body is barely one's own."

But even feminist therapists who understand perfectly well that the personal is political, that the family and community conflict may be worth probing instead of escaping, who know better than to idealize individuation and demean connectedness—still these same feminists sometimes miss the point about Jewishness and see it only as an archaic construct to shed.

In addition, Jews have fuzzy boundaries. Boundaries between the self, the family, and community. Between the generations. Between history and the present. Between national identity and identification across national lines with the Jewish people. Even one's body is barely one's own. A friend says, *You return from the toilet, and everyone wants to know: did you go?* The nosiness characteristic of Jewish culture relates both to responsibility and danger; if you constantly monitor information, you may be able to ward off disaster.

How do I live my life if it is not my own? There are injunctions directed at me, as a Jewish member of a larger entity, the Jewish people; as a female member of this same entity; and as a woman. They all agree on one point; *Everyone else is more important than I am.* As a Jewish woman, I need protection against these injunctions. But the therapist who attempts to point out the danger without grasping also the positive life-affirming aspect of Jewish culture forfeits my trust.

I know that not every Jewish woman who seeks therapy wants to address her Jewishness; nor would I presume to dictate the form this work should take (though as a secular Jew I will also confess to disappointment that so much of it, related to or independent from therapy, has centered on religion). But since Jewishness is a collective endeavor, the work to reclaim it will be pursued with other Jewish women, in study groups, cultural activities, as well as political work as Jews. Therapists need to understand that this work can in itself constitute a healing, and that it takes courage.

When Jewish women criticize mainstream or traditional Judaism, or when we criticize Israel, it feels like splitting the family. And it feels like our fault. As daughters in Jewish homes, many of us learned to shore up the family, to protect it. Much of the work any of us do in therapy includes unlearning this protection, a counter-education that may be, as I've said, especially frightening for minorities, including Jews.

Are we dividing the Jewish people and exposing them to danger? Are we abandoning our fathers and brothers whom we were trained to flatter and protect? Will the community of Jews reject us and will we then be alone, hated by both Jews and non-Jews? What does it mean to raise charged and potentially divisive issues in a group that seemed, up until the disruption, to be getting on fine? It can provoke in us great longing and dread.

In addition, for Jews who felt constrained by the growing-up demands of their family or Jewish community, and who may have created some freedom through distance, the thought of engaging with any level of Jewishness will feel like rejoining the family, with all the attendant conflict.

Therapists must help us, then, to understand why we are afraid, deeply, irrationally afraid of our own power. We're afraid of sexism. Anti-Semitism. We're afraid of division, of anger. We're constrained by our own ignorance of Jewish history and culture, by our lack of pride in who we are, our lack of trust in one another. We're reluctant to rejoin a family we gratefully escaped.

Therapy's task is to help us recognize our fears and welcome our strengths, to help us create this world not in spite of who we are, but because of it.

Excerpted with permission from Jewish Women in Therapy: Seen But Not Heard, ed. Rachel Josefowitz Siegel and Ellen Cole (New York: Harington Park Press, 1991).

THE WAYS WE WERE

(continued from page 32)
Ladies' Free Loan Society) only began accepting women members in 1955. Although the constitution of the Lafayette (Indiana) Orthodox Hebrew Free Loan Association stipulated that any Jewish resident of the greater Lafayette area was eligible for membership, women were refused membership until 1972! In Canada, the Montreal Hebrew Free Loan Association rejected "applicants not of age, women married or endorsers unsatisfactory."

Not all male-dominated free loan societies were discriminatory. Often, women borrowed money without their husbands' endorsements; sometimes they even served as requisite co-signers for men. Separate women's loan associations, however, were more than economic institutions; they provided women with their own institutions in which to exercise important communal leadership.

While compiling this history of women's credit networks, I even came across Pauline Perlmutter Steinem—Gloria Steinem's grandmother. Born in Poland, she settled in Toledo, Ohio, where she was president of her local Jewish Free Loan Association, became a suffragist, and paved the way for women's entry into many spheres of Toledo public life.

Immigrant loan associations offer us a glimpse into the economic lives of our Jewish foremothers, and a sense of the vitality we've inherited.

Shelly Tenenbaum is an assisstant professor of sociology at Clark University, currently on leave at Radcliffe's Bunting Institute. She is writing a book, Immigrants and Capital: The Emergence of Jewish Loan Societies in the United States, 1880-1945.

(continued from page 13)

hours because the vast and unmarked rural borders made it hard to spot refugees. Scarier than imagining jail for herself was the fear that the refugees would get caught, "because being sent back to their countries meant almost certain death. There is this incredible feeling of joy when you first see a huddled group walking towards you across a border," Turchik says. "So far, they've made it."

"I never told a soul about my sanctuary work"

Over time Turchick began to make the rest of her life revolve around her clandestine involvements. "I never told a soul about my sanctuary work, but slowly my jobs became those that could be stopped whenever I was needed. I did pottery on my own, repaired dolls, and pretty much stopped teaching," she explains. Her phone was tapped, so her family developed a "code." And even though her current work with refugees is legal, she (like her fellow border workers) remains cautious during news interviews and refuses to be photographed.

The question is, of course, why did Jacky Turchick risk jail, cripple her professional life, and disrupt her family's existence to be on call for strangers? Turchick recalls her temple's 1983 "freedom seder," when she first volunteered to drive refugees.

"I remember wavering for a long, long time. I was thinking that any excuse *I* gave *anyone* could have given during World War II. How many people *don't* have family...? *Everyone* has an income that they need....Finally I handed the baby to Ted and my arm just shot up in the air."

Turchick admits that her role strained her relationship with her partner of sixteen years, Ted Warmbrand, who is a musician and concert producer. "It was often nerve-wracking for the kids, too," she adds. "They never knew when I'd be gone or when I'd reappear. Ted was always there, of course, but then he'd always say, 'But why *you*, why does it have to be you?' There've been family struggles for all of us who have chosen to be really involved in sanctuary."

Growing up in Minneapolis, the third of nine children in a Conservative Jewish family, Turchick said her parents "always told us that the reason they had so many children was to make up for the Holocaust. I identified with this very literally," she says. "I always felt like I was actually a replacement. It gave me a sense of the preciousness of my life."

Always an activist, Turchick and her then-husband, a rabbinical student, moved to New York and enrolled their children in an integrated Harlem school where she taught claywork. Divorced in 1974, she moved to Tucson because of her asthma, and with Warmbrand became active in the anti-nuclear movement, successfully leading a fight to close a dangerous tritium plant.

Since 1990, when Mexican laws virtually stopped the flow of refugees and border runs were no longer useful, Turchick has found a fresh focus for her volunteer activities. One day she brought a few shirts and blankets to homeless refugees living in an orange grove near Phoenix. Before long she was bringing truckloads of shirts and blankets, and soon she was working 25 to 40 hours a week on her new project—setting up "Clinica Caminante," a health clinic for the more than 10,000 refugees who pass through the orange grove each year.

"We're excited about this new work," says Turchick, "though it's hard for me because I'm a real hands-on person and this work is mostly what I hate—fundraising and letter-writing. But a need exists, and after I'd visited the orange grove once, I couldn't say no." Presently Clinica Caminante has a house and grant money, and the next step is to enlist a nurse-practitioner.

After many years of working "underground," Turchick decided, in 1989, to acknowledge her role publicly for the first time by attending a regional Reform Judaism convention honoring sanctuary workers. "The sanctuary movement has given me a real sense of being part of history, of even thinking of God working in history. One thing we should be learning from the Torah is that *we* are on our own Biblical journeys. Thinking this way has made me put a different value on what I do in life, and figures like Harriet Tubman have given me models of hope. People need to know that we don't just stand by while injustice happens."

Most recently Turchick spent some time teaching claywork to children with special needs. "It was a joy," she says, "so I wanted to see how it would feel to do more work with these kids." She took a job as a special education pre-school aide, prompting her to return to college this summer for her first college degree, in special education.

"The biggest change in me as a result of being involved in sanctuary is that it's made me a happy person," she says simply. "It's a gift to have work that brings you so deep into humanity, so deep into something wonderful."

Maria Stieglitz is a freelance writer based in Sea Cliff, New York.

CONNECT

Norma Fain Pratt, Frieda Forman, and Irena Klepfisz are organizing a network devoted to **Yiddish women's literature**. A newsletter will announce new translations, scholarship, news and inquiries. All who want to share their interest in women writing in Yiddish contact: *Frieda Forman/Centre for Women's Studies in Education/Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/252 Bloor St. West/ Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6/ Canada.*

If you are or have been a leader of a **Jewish Women's consciousness-raising group** your experience would be helpful in a planned publication. *Biblio Press/1140 Broadway, #1507/ New York, NY 10001.*

The journal *Feminist Teacher* is seeking contributions on **feminist education and war** *Feminist Teacher/Ballantine 442/Indiana University/ Bloomington, IN 47405.*

For a major exhibition and oral history project on **Jewish women who served in the American military in World War II:** If you are available for interview, or have memorabilia of a woman who served, contact *Elaine Dorfman/ Judah Magnes Museum/2911 Russell St./ Berkeley, CA 94705* or *Leslie Freudenthal/ Jewish War Veterans National Archives and Museum/1811 R St. NW/ Washington, DC 20009.*

A Guide to Jewish Life in the Bay Area, a 160-page treasure map of congregations and coffee shops, folk dances and film festivals, service agencies and social action groups, as well as a history of the Jewish community is $5.00 plus $2.00 for P/H. *Northern California Jewish Bulletin/88 First St., #300/San Francisco, CA 94105.*

SEE THESE

"The Bitter and the Sweet: **Photographs of contemporary Jewish life in Morocco** shows 40 black & white and color photos by Roy Mittleman that are the fruit of 17 trips to Morocco from 1977-1987. On view through September at *Yeshiva University Museum/ 2520 Amsterdam Ave./ New York, NY 10033.*

Ancient traditions are reinterpreted in an outdoor sculpture installation, **Shelters**, which includes Susan Leibowvitz Steinman's *succah,* and Debborah Yaffe's *huppah.* Through September 1991 at the *Judah L. Magnes Museum/2911 Russell St. /Berkeley, CA 94705.*

RETREAT, REFRESH, REPLENISH

The Jewish cultural experience: Circle Lodge, in Hopewell, NY offers seminars in Yiddish language, literature and music; also, children's programs and a "Cultural Rosh Hashana" *The Workmen's Circle/45 East 33rd St./New York, NY 10016.*

The 1991 Summer Institute of the National **Havurah** Committee will held August 12-18 at Harcum Junior College, Bryn Mawr, PA. *NHC/9315 SW 61 Court/ Miami, FL 33156.*

Plan to be in Miami from November 8-12 for the **World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet**, to ensure that women have an equal say at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment & Development in Brazil. *Women's Foreign Policy Council/Environment and Development Program/845 Third Ave., 15th Floor/ New York, NY 10022.*

The Expulsion 1492 Conference, marking the quincentennial of Jews' forced departure from Spain will take place in Los Angeles, November 9-11. Open to the public. *The Sephardic Educational Center, 6505 Wilshire Blvd., #403/Los Angeles, CA 90048.*

A training program, organized by the Conservative movement, will prepare Lay men and women to assume **religious leadership roles in small and/or isolated congregations** that may not have professional religious leaders on a full-time bsis. Seminars will focus on conducting synagogue services, Torah reading, life cycle events, Jewish law and practice, religious schools, and tending to pastoral needs. August 4-13 at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. Contact: *Rabbi David Blumenfeld/ United Synagogue of America/ 155 Fifth Avenue/ New York, NY 10010.*

"Bring Your Own Topic" an informal monthly **Lesbian discussion group** is one of a variety of activities offered by Congregation Beth El Binah in Dallas, TX. *B.Y.O.T./5820 McCommas, #3/Dallas, TX 75206.*

BODY POLITIC

Women on Long Island now have a Domestic Violence Helpline sponsored in part by B'nai B'rith Women. *(516) 542-0404.*

Jewish Family & Children's Services in Pittsburgh and Ladies Hospital Aid Society sponsor a program to combat **domestic violence** For brochure or help, call *(412) 456-7350.*

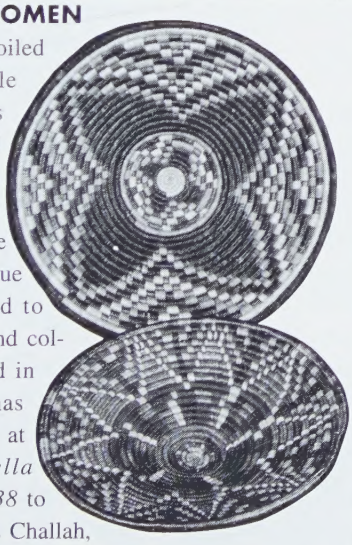
A Friend Indeed is a monthly newsletter that explores **menopause** as mythology, biology and psychology. 10 issues/ $30.00. *Box 515, Place du Parc Station/ Montreal H2W 2P1/ Canada.*

Mother's prayer/affirmation after miscarriage, written as a special Kaddish, is available from the author. Send $1.50 and a SASE to: *Stacey Dinner-Levin/ P.O.B. 80747/ Minneapolis, MN 55408.*

Keep Abortion Safe & Legal, a "Postcard Activist" book, has 30 pre-printed, pre-addressed postcards to be sent to federal and state lawmakers, political party leaders and health officials asking them to protect reproductive freedoms. Activists can use one postcard to join National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), the half-million member political arm of the pro-choice movement. *Available in bookstores.*

–compiled by Naomi Danis

JEWISH ETHIOPIAN WOMEN



traditionally wove colorful coiled baskets in Gondar, but while waiting a full year in Addis Ababa to go to Israel, they fell idle. American Association for Ethiopian Jews secured materials, and paid them (five times the going rate) to continue to weave, (The men refused to make baskets.) The designs and colors are specifically identified in Ethiopia as Jewish. AAEJ has 9500 of these baskets for sale at $40.00 each. Call *Daniella Kolodny/ AAEJ/(202) 223-6838* to buy singly or in bulk. Good as Challah, Matza or Chanuka gelt holders. The income from these sales aids in the resettlement and absorption of Ethiopian Jews in Israel.

BUYING CHICKENS, PAYING BILLS: JEWISH WOMEN'S LOAN SOCIETIES

Courtesy Rhode Island Jewish Historical Assn.

by Shelly Tenenbaum

Eva, a widow with six children, needed a loan to buy chickens for her poultry business. Esther, married to a Hebrew teacher, sought $200 to purchase machines for her gym and bathhouse. Clara, a peddler who was married with three children, needed capital for her line of trade. Mary, separated from her husband and a mother of five, required merchandise for her electrical supplies store.

Each of these Jewish women applied for loans during the Depression, and each was successful in her quest for credit. With the help of local Jewish credit associations, they, and scores of women like them, managed to survive through hard times. They had access to traditional Hebrew free loan societies and to modern credit unions. The former were organized around Biblical and Talmudic proscriptions of not charging interest; the latter were cooperatives that charged interest on their loans.

To my surprise, while researching immigrant Jewish credit institutions, I found that women appeared regularly as borrowers. In Pittsburgh, for example, one of every nine Hebrew Free Loan borrowers was a woman. Forty percent of the women requested funds for businesses while the rest had private needs: rent, medical bills, insurance, education (for themselves or children), moving expenses, vacations, Jewish holidays and divorce costs. A typical borrower is Ida, a gasoline attendant with three children. In 1938, Ida borrowed $100 for personal bills; in 1940, $60 for coal; and in 1942, $100 to pay the dentist.

Women played roles as lenders, too. In 1927, Jewish women in Boston ran eleven credit cooperatives such as the Mother's Credit Union, the Jewish Women's Credit Union and the Sisters Social Credit Union. Their membership ranged from 30 to 100 and their assets from a little over $300 to close to $15,000. According to one longtime Boston credit union activist, Jewish women's credit unions were "the forerunner of Women's Liberation."

Minnie Low, leader of the Chicago Woman's Loan Association (a Hebrew free loan society founded before the turn of the century) was proud that her organization was run exclusively by women. At a 1914 conference, Low boldly asserted that "no man has ever had an active voice in the affairs of this association. As contributing members, men have been granted the courtesy of affixing their names to the subscription list, otherwise all privileges have been denied them."

Low (who went on to become president of the National Conference of Jewish Charities) protested publicly when the National Association of Jewish Social Workers met in Baltimore and presented 31 speakers—all male.

How did women's loan societies begin? The Seattle Hebrew Ladies' Free Loan Society—to take one example—dates back to 1909, when a group of Jewish women organized a whist and sewing club with dues of 25 cents a month. After accumulating $64, they offered to buy something for the local synagogue. The rabbi refused their offer because he considered the funds gambling money. The women then decided to appropriate the money for free loans, and by 1913, the Hebrew Ladies' Free Loan Society of Seattle was born.

Some loan societies were administered by women but loaned money to both women and men. Others, like the Providence Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Society, loaned only to women. In Providence, the men who ran the local Hebrew free loan society denied women loans unless they acquired their husbands' signatures.

Such discrimination against women was evident in other communities too. The Seattle Hebrew Free Loan Society (different from the Seattle Hebrew

(continued on page 29)